



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

Enerji Güvenliđi

Economy News

Ekonomi Haberleri

Peace Process

Barış Süreci

Ethnic and Secterian Groups

Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar

Non State Actors

Devlet-dış Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler



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10 SEPTEMBER 2012

NO: 1455

1. IRAQ.....	3
• Iraqiya MP: security in disputed areas is the responsibility of all parties.....	3
• Iraqiya MP: the political blocs are not willing to hold the National meeting.....	3
• Abdul Mehdi, Brahimi discuss situation in Syria	4
• Iraqiya meets to discuss death sentence passed against Hashimi.....	4
• Barzani, Chalabi discuss current political situation	4
• MoP launches procedures to address goods arbitrary imports	5
• Araji warns from foreign plots against Iraq.....	6
• Talabani will return home in coming days, party sources.....	6
• Hashimi's trial tomorrow in absentia	7
• Four crises threaten situation in Ninewa, ex-official	7
• Call to expose attackers on Shiite mosques in Kirkuk, Islamic Turkmen Federation	8
• Turkey: We will not hand over Hashemi to Baghdad under any circumstances.....	8
• Iraq and Armenia sign memorandum of understanding.....	9
• Car bomb explosion near Investigation Department on Baghdad - Kirkuk road	10
• Iraq to open embassy in Armenia	10
• No candidate is nominated for Interior Ministry, says SLC	11
• Government begins preparing Negotiations Council draft law.....	12
• Kurdistan rejects formation of Tigris Operations Command	12
2. IRAN	13
• Parliament determined to help establish NAM secretariat in Iran: MPs	13
• Larijani: Iran-Russia Strategic Ties Play Crucial Role in Regional Security.....	14
• Tehran Starts Last Phase of Iran-Turkmenistan Railway Project.....	15
• Iran's private sector exports first oil consignment.....	16
• Lakhdar Brahimi to travel to Tehran	17
• 'Lebanon, Syria are Iran's strategic depth'	18
• US not setting deadlines on Iran: Clinton.....	18
• Iran, China share interests in quest for world peace: Chinese official.....	19
• Oil production from South Pars expected in March: POGC head	20
3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE	22
• Israel Grants University Status to Settlement College	22
• Erekat Calls on US to Lift Ban on \$200m of Aid to PA	22
• Abbas Instructs to Hold Meeting to Solve Economic Crisis	22
• PMO, Abbas trade barbs over settler condemnation	24
• Montreal mayor makes historic visit to Israel.....	25
• J'lem welcomes EU move to intensify Iran sanctions.....	26
• PM: Ariel is integral part of Israel, always will be	28
• Abbas attacks Israel, Hamas over PA economic woes	29
4. AFRICA and EGYPT	32



• Youth of Ennahdha Protest to “Put Pressure on The Government”	32
• Head of Islamist Ennahdha Party to File Suit Against “The Independent”	33
• Opposition Party Activists Reportedly Assaulted by Religious Extremists	34
• Party in Governing Coalition Elects New Secretary General	36
• Questions of Legitimacy as First Anniversary of National Constituent Assembly Creation Approaches.....	37
• Update: First football match since Port Said goes ahead despite protests	38
• Cairo Criminal Court postpones NGO funding case to 2 October	39
• Over half of Egyptians want female vice president, says poll	41
5. JORDAN and LEBANON.....	41
• Berri transfers electoral draft law to parliamentary committees	41
• Lebanon will not allow itself to be destabilized, Miqati says.....	42
• Nasri Khoury warns of attempts to harm Syrian-Lebanese relations	43
6. SYRIA.....	43
• UN-Arab League envoy on Syria to travel to Tehran.....	43
• Syrian jets blitz rebel Aleppo bastions, NGO says	44
• Peace envoy Brahimi in Cairo on Syria mission	45
• Brahimi kickstarts ‘scary’ Syria mission	46
• EU ministers agree to beef up sanctions against Assad regime.....	48
7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA.....	51
• High oil price not justified by market fundamentals, says Saudi Arabia	51
• Bahraini police shoot Shiite protester, says opposition	51
• Eight wanted Al-Qaeda suspects surrender, says Saudi ministry	52
8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN	53
• Report: US, Britain Plotting to Disintegrate Afghanistan	53
• Afghan president says US must hand over Bagram prison to Kabul	54
• Taliban Denounces Blacklisting Of Haqqani Network	55
• US-led airstrikes kill 7 in Afghanistan	56
• Coordinated Explosions Jolt Afghanistan's Western Province	56

1. IRAQ

- **Iraqiya MP: security in disputed areas is the responsibility of all parties.**



BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, for the Iraqiya coalition, Mohammed al-Khalidi said: "The disputed areas have privacy and maintaining security and stability in these areas is the responsibility of all political parties."

He told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that "the positions and statements during the last days about Tigris operations does not serve the political arena," noting that "the formation of a joint operations command is better for the stability of these areas."

He continued "the political blocs must take the peaceful solution to resolve the crisis rather than convulsive statements and positions that not serve anyone."

It is mentioned that the opinions and statements of the political blocs on forming the Tigris operations are contrasted, while the Arabs welcome the formation of the Operations Command, the Kurds opinion is that the formation process is a violation of the Constitution and worsening the political situation more.

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

- **Iraqiya MP: the political blocs are not willing to hold the National meeting.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, for the Iraqiya coalition, Abdullah al-Garab said: "the political blocs are not willing to hold the National Meeting in order not to loose their personal gains and achievements during the past period."

He told the National Iraqi News / NINA / " what is happening now in the political arena is just media assurances ," adding " If all political parties are willing to activate the reforms paper or to hold the national meeting for the benefit of the Iraqi people, the national meeting would have been held."

The National Alliance announced last week that the reform committee will begin, in the next few days, contacting the Kurdistan Alliance and the Iraqiya List in order to activate the reforms paper.

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

- **Abdul Mehdi, Brahimi discuss situation in Syria**

Baghdad (NINA) – Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council's (SIIC) official, Adel Abdul Mehdi, discussed in Paris with the UN-Arab League envoy for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, latest developments in the area and the situation in Syria.

A statement issued on Sunday, Sep. 9, by Abdul Mehdi's Office said that Abdul Mehdi met in Paris with Brahimi and former Lebanese Information Minister, Ghassan Salameh. The discussed the situation in Syria and the importance for making the international envoy's mission successful to put an end to the bloodshed in Syria and find suitable solution that serves the interests of the Syrian people.

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

- **Iraqiya meets to discuss death sentence passed against Hashimi**

Baghdad (NINA) – Leader of Iraqiya Parliamentary bloc, Salman al-Jumaili, announced that Iraqiya slate is holding a meeting to discuss death sentence passed against Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi.

Jumaili told NINA on Sunday evening, Sep. 9, that a statement will be issued after the meeting explaining the Iraqiya slate's stance regarding the verdict.

Earlier in the day, the Criminal Court passed death sentence in absentia against Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi and the Director of his office, Ahmed Qahtan, in the case of killing the lawyer Suhad al-Khafaji and National Security officer Talib Balasim and his wife.

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

- **Barzani, Chalabi discuss current political situation**

Baghdad (AIN) –The President of Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani, and the head of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmed al-Chalabi, discussed the current political situation in Iraq.

A statement by the Presidency of KR received by AIN cited "Barzani received Chalabi on Sunday as they reviewed the impediments that hurdle the political process in addition to the relations among the various political sides."

"Both sides stressed the importance of intensifying the efforts to ensure the real partnership and the joint performance in ruling the country through adherence to the constitution and the former agreements," the statement concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18168:barzani-chalabi-discuss-current-political-situation-&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19

- **MoP launches procedures to address goods arbitrary imports**

Baghdad (AIN) -The Ministry of Planning assured "The start of the procedures to address the arbitrary import problem in

coordination with a number of Ministries such as Trade and Finance to eliminate importing the low-quality commodities and make the importation limited by the domestic markets needs."

The Director General of the Central Office of Statistics, Saad Abdul Wahab, stated to AIN "The Planning Ministry is determined to adopt new mechanisms through cooperating with the Ministries of Finance and Trade to eliminate the arbitrary export which exceeds the needs of the Iraqi markets."

"The Ministry seeks to activate some laws most notably the Custom tariff law to reduce the spread of the goods that the domestic consumers do not need in addition to recommending the Trade Ministry to tighten the control over granting the import licenses," Wahab added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18169:mop-launches-procedures-to-address-arbitrary-import&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19

- **Araji warns from foreign plots against Iraq**

Baghdad (AIN) -MP, Zuhair al-Araji, of the Iraqiya Hurra bloc warned from "Forming what is so called Iraqi Free Army in Iraq," considering it as "a regional plot aims to disturb the political process," calling to discuss the Political Reforms paper seriously to face these plots.

Araji confirmed in a statement "The necessity to be aware of the foreign and regional plots which aim to foil the political process and destabilize the security situation."

"These challenges need to be confronted by honest and earnest stance by the leaders and members of the political process," he added.

"Forming what is so called the Iraqi Free Army and offload some areas of weapons to transport them to other regions is a clear evidence for existence of a formidable plots against Iraq aiming at weakening it especially after resuming Iraq's vital role in the foreign world when hosted the Arab League Summit and its participation in the Non-Aligned Movement conference," he assured.

Araji urged "The leaders of the political blocs to earnestly discuss the proposal of the Political Reforms to put an end for the political disputes and controversies which gave a negative image about Iraq in the foreign world that Iraq is weak and it cannot confront the foreign challenges as a result of its disability to address the internal crisis.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18030:araji-warns-of-foreign-plots-against-iraq&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19

- **Talabani will return home in coming days, party sources**

SULAIMANIYA / Aswat al-Iraq: Kurdish Union Party announced today that president Jalal Talabani's will return home during the coming days to assume his post.

His first return leg shall be Kurdistan; he will then head to Baghdad, party spokesman Azad Jindyani said today.

Talabani was meant to return after Eid festivities, after a medical trip lasted for about two months in Germany.

Talabani submitted an 8-point initiative to solve the political crisis in the country and expected to call for convening the National Conference after his return.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28125uyzfzerharf450yvhr3vb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150395&l=1

- **Hashimi's trial tomorrow in absentia**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: The Higher Criminal Court will hold it is meetings for vice-president Tariq al-Hashimi's trial in absentia on charges of "terrorism."

It is expected that the verdict may be issued tomorrow.

The trial was postponed until 9 September, after hearings from five witnesses.

Tajdeed Movement MP Jamal al-Kailani, headed by Hashimi, expected "if the verdict is issued, the political situation will

come into disturbances and the country will undergo a new crisis."

Hashimi is currently residing in Turkey, which rejected handling him over to the Iraqi authorities for "terrorism" charges.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28125uyzfzerharf450yvhr3vb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150392&l=1

- **Four crises threaten situation in Ninewa, ex-official**

NINEWA / Aswat al-Iraq: A former provincial council member warned against the explosion of the situation in the province.

He warned against four crises, including the administrative and financial corruption, administrative borders of the province, Beishmarga forces, permission of Arab ethnic components to build in the province and the deterioration of services in the province.

Ninewa province, 205 km north of the capital, Baghdad, is one of the disputed areas between Baghdad and Arbil as well as one of the hot places in Iraqi security and politics.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28125uyzfzerharf450yvhr3vb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150391&l=1

- **Call to expose attackers on Shiite mosques in Kirkuk, Islamic Turkmen Federation**

Call to expose attackers on Shiite mosques in Kirkuk, Islamic Turkmen Federation

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: The Iraqi Islamic Turkmen Federation condemned the attacks on some Shiite mosques in Kirkuk that led to tens of casualties, calling to expose the culprits.

In a statement, the Federation pointed out that "Kirkuk is facing a terrorist campaign that comes within the political crisis engulfing Iraq.

"It is a desperate attempt to ignite denominational conflicts among Kirkuk social components", he added.

Kirkuk witnessed many explosions against Shiite mosques after Friday's noon prayers that resulted in tens of casualties, as reported by official sources.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28125uyzfzerharf450yvhr3vb%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150390&l=1

- **Turkey: We will not hand over Hashemi to Baghdad under any circumstances**



Shafaq News / Sources from the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced that Ankara will not hand over the Vice President, Tareq al-Hashemi to Baghdad "under any circumstances".

The sources said in remarks to the Turkish press briefed by "Shafaq News", that "Hashemi resident in Istanbul, who was sentenced to death in absentia in Baghdad has met on Sunday the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu at his home in Ankara and took guarantees from him of not handing him over and let him stay in Turkey to whenever he wants."

This was considered as a response from Turkey to what it has said as sectarian policies of Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki.

The judiciary has issued on Sunday a sentence in absentia to death by hanging on Hashemi after being convicted on terrorism charges and managing "death squads".

The court also sentenced Hashemi's office manager to death as well as his son-in-law, Ahmed Qahtan.

The Supreme Judicial Council decided to trial Hashemi in absentia on three murders charges, as these issues are related to the assassination of a director general at the Department of national Security, an officer at the Interior Ministry and a lawyer.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3496-turkey-we-will-not-hand-over-hashemi-to-baghdad-under-any-circumstances.html>

- **Iraq and Armenia sign memorandum of understanding**



Shafaq News / The prime ministry announced on Sunday that Iraq has signed with Armenia, a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in several areas, including investment, as well as forming a higher committee to follow up the development of relations between the two countries.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Ruz Nuri Shawis said in a statement issued by his office received by "Shafaq News" after meeting the President of the Republic of Armenia, Serge Sarkisian that "intensive meetings took place with officials in Yerevan that led to sign a memorandum of understanding in the health field as well as industry, trade, agriculture and investment fields " .

Shaways added that "it was agreed to form a higher committee to follow up the development of relations between the two countries as the Iraqi government and

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have taken a decision to open an embassy of Iraq in Armenia soon."

The Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Ruz Nuri Shawis and his accompanying delegation that has included ministers of trade, industry and minerals, human rights, the Chairman of the National Investment and Ambassador and the Head of Europe at the Foreign Ministry as they have met in their visit to the capital Yerevan last Tuesday with the President of the Republic of Armenia, Serge Sarkisian.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3493-iraq-and-armenia-sign-memorandum-of-understanding-.html>

- **Car bomb explosion near Investigation Department on Baghdad - Kirkuk road**

Shafaq News / A security source said in Kirkuk province on Sunday that four people were injured by a car bomb near the Investigation Department, on the road of Baghdad- Kirkuk.



The source told "Shafaq News", that "a car bomb has exploded today in Kirkuk province that was parked near the Investigation Department on the road from Baghdad to Kirkuk."

He added that "the explosion has caused the injury of 4 people who were near the site of the accident and were taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital."

A source in the Kirkuk police said, earlier on Sunday that the outcome of the bombing of the new volunteers in Kirkuk rose to six dead and 21 wounded in a car bomb that has exploded in Hawija caused the injury of five policemen and civilians.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3491-car-bomb-explosion-near-investigation-department-on-baghdad-kirkuk-road.html>

- **Iraq to open embassy in Armenia**

ERBİL, Sept. 9 (AKnews) – Iraqi Government is planning to open its embassy in Armenia in the near future, it was announced today.

The decision for the opening of the embassy came in an official visit by an Iraqi delegation headed by Deputy Iraqi Prime Minister Rozh Nouri Shawais and included several ministers among them the Trade Minister Khairullah Hassan.

"Both Iraq and Armenia agreed on opening the Iraqi embassy in Armenia soon. Also Iraqi Government asked the Iraqi Foreign Ministry for taking legal procedures for the opening process." Iraq's Trade Minister Khairullah Hassan told AKnews.

Armenia opened its embassy in Iraq recently.

The Iraqi delegation returned from Armenia yesterday and announced a joint committee for strengthening ties between the two nations.

The Iraqi delegation met with Armenia's top officials including the vice president and prime minister, trade, industry,

agriculture, health and human rights ministers.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/325539/>

- **No candidate is nominated for Interior Ministry, says SLC**

BAGHDAD, Sept. 8 (AKnews) - The State of Law Coalition (SLC) led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki said the National Alliance (NA) has so far not nominated any candidate for the Interior Ministry, adding that this issue will be discussed later.

The political blocs agreed that the NA names the candidate for the Interior Ministry and the Iraqiya coalition names the candidate for the Ministry of Defense.

The leader of the coalition Ihsan al-Awadi said the coalition is awaiting the result of the negotiations of the negotiating committee formed by the NA with Iraqiya List and the rest of the blocs to choose the candidate for the defense ministry.

The Defense Ministry is managed by Culture Minister Saadoun al-Dulaimi after being assigned by Prime Minister Nouri al-

Maliki amid criticism of Allawi's list, while Maliki still holds the Interior Ministry post.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/325361/>

- **Government begins preparing Negotiations Council draft law**

ERBIL, September 8 (AKnews) – The deputy head of the Kurdistan faction in the Kurdistan Parliament said the Kurdistan Regional Government began preparing the draft law of the Supreme Negotiations Council.

omar noradeni-omar noradeneOmer Nouradini said: "All parliament factions are waiting for the Kurdistan Regional Government to submit the draft law of the Supreme Negotiations Council to the Kurdistan Parliament to work on it."

Nouradini added: "The Kurdistan Regional Government began working on the draft law to hand it to us for further necessary work. After the submission of the draft law the views and opinions of all factions will be taken and then the draft will be approved in coordination with all parties and according to political compatibility."

On August 6 the Kurdistan Parliament held an advisory meeting to form a Supreme Negotiations Council with the Iraqi federal government regarding disputed matters between the region and Baghdad.

In the meeting all participants described the formation of the council as important and necessary.

In the second meeting of parliament regarding the draft law on August 11, the parliament asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to prepare a draft law and submit it to parliament.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/325359/>

- **Kurdistan rejects formation of Tigris Operations Command**

ERBIL, September 8 (AKnews) – Kurdistan Region's political parties today rejected the decision to form the Tigris Operations Command.



The Kurdistan Region's President Masoud Barzani met with political parties in Pirmam to discuss a number of important issues regarding the region.

The secretary of Kurdistan's Toilers Party Balen Abdullah said: "The meeting ended an hour ago between Barzani and the region's officials and political parties. The points discussed in the meeting included the visit of the US Congress and Foreign Ministry's delegation."

Barzani explained that the US delegation's visit was to discuss the region's situation, the region and Baghdad issues and the current crisis in Syria, confirming that they support solving Iraqi problems.

"The second point was the formation of the Tigris Operations Command by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. The formation of this force is against article 61

of the Iraqi constitution and the agreements between Baghdad and Erbil."

Abdullah added that all parties rejected the decision and expressed their support for Kirkuk Provincial Council, which earlier rejected the decision, adding that they are against Maliki's policy of working against Kurds.

Head of the Gorran faction Kardo Mohammed, who attended the meeting, said: "The formation of this force is against the Iraqi constitution and is about declaring a military area in Kirkuk province and disputed areas and also to cripple article 140 and reduce Kirkuk province's authority."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/325344/>

2. IRAN

- **Parliament determined to help establish NAM secretariat in Iran: MPs**



TEHRAN – Two hundred and fourteen Iranian lawmakers issued a statement addressed to the Supreme Leader on Sunday saying that they are determined to take the measures necessary to help establish the secretariat of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Iran.

In the statement, the MPs also said that they would help implement other ratifications of the 16th NAM summit, which was held in Tehran from August 26 to 31.

Addressing the Leader, the Iranian lawmakers wrote, “The fact that the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement was held due to the efficient and powerful management of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and your participation in the summit, which was a source of pride, illustrated international confidence in the system and

the Iranian nation and the isolation of the enemies of the nation and the system.”

“The representatives in the Majlis deem it necessary to congratulate you on the great victory of the system and the Iranian nation in regard to the holding of the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement and the victory of the Islamic Republic in a diplomatic war and to thank all organizers... particularly the diplomatic apparatus, security, military, police, and Basiji forces, and (to thank) the people for their sincere cooperation.”

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/101362-parliament-determined-to-help-establish-nam-secretariat-in-iran-mps>

- **Larijani: Iran-Russia Strategic Ties Play Crucial Role in Regional Security**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said the relations between Iran and Russia play a strategic role in the maintenance of security in the region.



"The existing capacities in the two countries should be utilized for the establishment of durable security and stability in the region, and this requires continued consultations between the two countries' political and parliamentary officials," Larijani said at a meeting with Russia's Ambassador to Tehran Levon Dzhagaryan on Sunday.

He urged further expansion and improvement of Iran-Russia relations, and stated, "The Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) welcomes any activity which leads to the consolidation and deepening of economic, political and scientific relations, specially in parliamentary grounds."

The Russian diplomat, for his part, lauded the relations between Tehran and Moscow as "good and developing", and underscored his country's strong willingness to further expand relations

and cooperation with the Islamic Republic in all grounds.

"Senior Russian officials want to expand the relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran in all the different spheres of politics, economy and trade," said the Russian envoy.

In similar remarks in August, Larijani said in a meeting with the Russian President's Envoy to the 16th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Tehran Konstantin Shuvalov that strong relations between Tehran and Moscow will reinvigorate peace and stability in the region.

Iran and Russia are two strong neighboring countries which enjoy a special position in the international arena and have constant and continued consultations on key regional and global issues.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106062592>

- **Tehran Starts Last Phase of Iran-Turkmenistan Railway Project**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran started laying the rail line of a key transit and transportation

project linking Iran's Northern city of Gorgan to IncheBoron in Turkmenistan.



Speaking to FNA, Iranian Deputy Minister of Road and Urbanization Seyed Ahmad Sadeqi said that the last phase of the construction of the railway officially started in a ceremony with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in attendance.

He said that construction of the infrastructures of the 80km long railway has already been finished.

The railway will link Iran to Turkmenistan and then to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and will connect the CIS countries with the Indian Ocean and high seas and the Persian Gulf littoral states.

The primary agreement on the construction of the rail link among Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan was signed between presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in April 2007 in the city of

Turkmenbashi and its final agreement was signed in a summit meeting in Tehran in September of the same year by the three presidents.

The total route of the railway is 1000 kilometers, of which 90 kilometers would be in Iran, 700 kilometers in Turkmenistan and 210 kilometers in Kazakhstan.

The railway facilitates transportation of goods from the Central Asian countries to the Persian Gulf.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106062568>

- **Iran's private sector exports first oil consignment**

TEHRAN, Sept. 9 (MNA) - The Iranian private sector has delivered the first shipment of crude oil to foreign buyers, despite the U.S. and EU sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic's oil sector.

Non-Iranian tankers transported the oil.

The private sector has signed several contracts to sell crude oil overseas, Hassan Khosrojerdi, the chairman of the union of

Iranian exporters of oil derivatives, told the Mehr news agency on Sunday.

An agreement has been made that allows an Iranian consortium comprising private firms to export 20 percent of its oil exports to international markets, including the EU, he said.

"This equates to around 400,000 to 500,000 barrels of oil per day," he added.

Economic experts say that Iran's private sector will fill the gap created by international sanctions on Iran's oil sector and central bank.

On September 2, Mohammad-Ali Khatibi, who is Iran's OPEC governor and the director of the National Iranian Oil Company, said Iran's oil exports are at their normal level and are unaffected by Western embargoes.

"We don't see anything abnormal, almost everything is progressing routinely," he told the ISNA news agency.

In July, Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi said that although the West has imposed sanctions on Iran's oil sector with the goal

of toppling the Islamic establishment, the country's oil exports will never be halted because oil consuming countries need Iranian crude.

"There are many ways to easily sell oil, one of which is to take advantage of businessmen and the private sector," Qasemi said.

At the beginning of 2012, the United States and the European Union imposed new sanctions on Iran's oil and financial sectors with the goal of preventing other countries from purchasing Iranian oil and conducting transactions with the Central Bank of Iran.

U.S. sanctions entered into force on June 28, while EU bans on Iranian oil imports came into force on July 1.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1692909>

- **Lakhdar Brahimi to travel to Tehran**

TEHRAN, Sept. 9 (MNA) – Lakhdar Brahimi, the new United Nations and Arab League envoy on Syria, plans to travel to Tehran after a trip to Damascus, the Iranian

deputy foreign minister for Asia and Pacific Affairs announced on Sunday.

“The United Nations envoy on Syria plans to visit Tehran at a proper time after a visit to Syria,” Abbas Araqchi told the Mehr News Agency.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi held a phone conversation with Brahimi late on Sunday.

Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary general, traveled to Tehran twice while he served as the UN envoy on Syria.

Annan announced his resignation in August after six months of trying to get the warring sides in Syria, and their outside backers, to find a negotiated settlement out of the crisis.

Syria has declared its readiness to cooperate with Brahimi.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1692538>

- 'Lebanon, Syria are Iran's strategic depth'

TEHRAN, Sept. 8 (MNA) – Lebanon and Syria are Iran's strategic depth, says a top military advisor to the Supreme Leader.

“Defending the Palestinian nation is in line with our strategic defense interests and Lebanon and Syria are our strategic depth,” Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi said on Saturday.

Safavi, the former commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, went on to say that “if the Zionist regime does anything against us, resistance groups, especially the Lebanese Hezbollah, as our strategic defensive depth, will give a response to this regime more easily.”

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1692014>

- **US not setting deadlines on Iran: Clinton**

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says Washington is “not setting deadlines” for a diplomatic resolution of the Western dispute over Iran's nuclear energy program.



In an interview with Bloomberg Radio, Clinton claimed the US administration still considers a diplomatic solution as “by far the best approach,” but repeated the US rhetoric of pressure against the Islamic Republic.

In early 2012, the US and the EU approved new sanctions against Iran's oil and financial sectors. The illegal embargoes aim to prevent other countries from purchasing the Iranian oil or transacting with the Central Bank of Iran.

The illegal US-engineered sanctions were imposed over the unfounded accusation that Iran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran has vehemently refuted the allegation, arguing that as a committed signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is entitled to use

nuclear technology for peaceful objectives.

“We’re convinced that we have more time to focus on these sanctions,” Clinton said in the interview.

In response to a question on whether the Obama administration would ‘lay out sharper red lines’ as requested by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Clinton said, “We’re not setting deadlines.”

On September 2, Netanyahu called on the international community to set a "clear red line" for Iran to halt its nuclear energy program.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/10/260763/us-not-setting-deadlines-on-iran-clinton/>

- **Iran, China share interests in quest for world peace: Chinese official**

As two developing and influential countries, Iran and China have extensive common interests in defending international and regional peace and promoting joint development.”

Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress Wu Bangguo

The chairman of the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress says Tehran and Beijing enjoy “extensive” common interests in safeguarding regional and global peace and stability.

“As two developing and influential countries, Iran and China have extensive common interests in defending international and regional peace and promoting joint development,” Wu Bangguo said on Sunday upon his arrival in Tehran.



Wu is on a three-day official visit to Iran upon the invitation of Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani.

The Chinese official expressed his country's willingness to further the "friendly ties" with the Islamic Republic.

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1971, the ties between Iran and China have “always been growing and positive,” leading to “genuine benefits” for both nations, Wu said.

Iran is currently China's third largest supplier of crude, providing Beijing with roughly 12 percent of its total annual oil consumption - nearly one million barrels per day.

The current bilateral trade between the two countries is dominated by Iran's energy exports, while the main Chinese exports to Iran include machinery and textiles among other consumer goods.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/10/260759/iran-china-tied-in-world-peace-quest/>

- **Oil production from South Pars expected in March: POGC head**

Iran is scheduled to start oil production from the giant offshore South Pars Gas

Field as of the next Iranian calendar year beginning in March 2013.

Mousa Souri, the managing-director of Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), said on Sunday that drilling of the necessary wells for oil recovery from the massive gas field - shared with Qatar - will be fully completed by March next year.

The drilling of the appraisal wells in the oil layer of South Pars was commissioned to Iranian contractors in January. Based on a 180-million-dollar contract, Global Petrotech Kish (GPT Kish) was tasked with drilling two appraisal wells within 470 days in order to measure the amount of crude oil in the field and draw up a master development plan (MDP) for the oil layer, known as A2.



The development of A2 was commissioned to Petro Iran Company in

March 2005 and so far roughly USD 500 million has been invested in this project.

The crude oil produced from A2 is estimated to reach 25,000 barrels per day (bpd). The layer has approximately 7.5 billion barrels of oil in place, 10 percent of which is recoverable.

Qatar is already recovering 450,000 bpd from the shared oil layer in South Pars.

South Pars covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are within Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, i.e. the North Dome, are in Qatar's territorial waters.

The Iranian gas field contains 14 trillion cubic meters of natural gas (about eight percent of the world's reserves) and more than 18 billion barrels of liquefied natural gas (LNG) resources.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/09/260674/south-pars-to-produce-oil-in-march/>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israel Grants University Status to Settlement College**

JERUSALEM, September 9, 2012 (Wafa) – The Israeli government Sunday granted the university status to Ariel college, which is located in the illegal settlement of Ariel in the West Bank, according to Israeli media reports.

This decision came following a vote by the Council for Higher Education in Judea and Samaria. 11 voted in favor of the decision; while 2 against.

Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, praised this decision and said that Israel is in need of more universities in light of the increasing number of population, “Ariel Settlement will remain under Israel’s control forever,” he said.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20637>

- **Erekat Calls on US to Lift Ban on \$200m of Aid to PA**

JERICHO, September 8, 2012 (Wafa) – PLO Executive Committee Member Saeb

Erekat Saturday called on US administration to Lift the ban imposed by the Congress on \$200 million of US’ financial aid to the Palestinian Authority.

During his meeting with Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority Robert H. Serry and US Consul General Michael Ratney separately, Erekat stressed that the economic and financial crisis the Palestinian people are going through is due to the Israeli occupation’s settlement policies, as well as not transferring the financial obligations to PA.

He asserted that the Palestinian bid to the United Nations doesn’t contradict peace or signed agreements or international legitimacy, on the contrary, it reinforces peace and maintains the two-state solution within 1967 borders.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20633>

- **Abbas Instructs to Hold Meeting to Solve Economic Crisis**

RAMALLAH, September 8, 2012 (Wafa) – President Mahmoud Abbas Saturday said

that he instructed specialized ministers to hold a meeting on Sunday to study solutions to solve the current economic hardship, stressing that the radical solution is “ending the Israeli occupation.”

During a press conference at the presidential headquarters in Ramallah, Abbas confirmed that the Palestinian Authority is determined to seek a non-member state status at the United Nations on September 27th.

He discussed different topics, such as the Palestinian bid at the UN, the reconciliation, the investigation in the death of Late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, local elections and the current financial crisis.

He asserted the Palestinian demands to halt the settlement activities and establish a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Regarding the reconciliation, Abbas said that it has been agreed upon to conduct presidential, legislative and national elections in Doha and has been re-asserted in Cairo, however, the elections

committee was forced by Hamas to leave the Gaza Strip and end its work.

He denied claims that PA is holding any political detainees, in response to those who relate the halt in achieving the reconciliation to this political file.

Abbas said that there will be no further dialogue regarding the reconciliation because all aspects have been agreed upon in Cairo, pointing out that PA strictly refuses dividing the “Palestinian representation,” and stressing “the reconciliation is the elections.”

Abbas pointed out that the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad denied inviting Hamas leader Ismail Haniya to Tehran summit, offering to host dialogue between PA and Hamas in Iran; an offer that was rejected by Abbas, who stressed that dialogue will only be held in Cairo.

“Whoever wants to establish an independent authority or Emirate in Gaza will not succeed because our people will not allow it,” said Abbas.

Concerning the investigation in the death of Arafat, Abbas said that the Palestinian

people want to learn the truth, pointing out that a special committee to investigate this case will arrive soon to the Palestinian Territory.

Speaking of the recent economic hardship, Abbas said that the Palestinian division is one of the main reasons behind the financial crisis.

He emphasized the Palestinian government's efforts to control the price hike and called on the people to "calmly and non-violently" express their opinion, affirming that the leadership is not against freedom of speech.

He explained, "Any activities to protest the current economic hardship are acceptable and police will not interfere."

Regarding people's recent demonstrations demanding Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to resign, Abbas said that Fayyad is part of PA and it is not acceptable to solely hold him responsible for the financial crisis. "I am the first one to hold responsibility."

He condemned any suggestions that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and said: "We refuse to talk about it whether

suggested by US President Barak Obama or Republican Presidential candidate Matt Romney," stressing that "East Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine."

In response to Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman's inciting statements against Abbas, he said "I will not leave and our people will stand still until we gain our lawful rights."

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20632>

- **PMO, Abbas trade barbs over settler condemnation**

Prime Minister Office slams PA president for saying Israeli condemnation of settler "price tag" attacks are insincere.

The Prime Minister's Office slammed PA President Mahmoud Abbas on Sunday for saying that the government's condemnations of the "price tag" vigilante attacks against churches and mosques were disingenuous.

"Don't believe that those who attacked the monastery in Latrun [last Monday], and mosques and churches did it spontaneously, on their own and alone,"

Abbas said on Saturday night at a press conference in Ramallah. “The Netanyahu government condemns these things, but it is not right,” he said. “If this was one of ours [who carried out these types of actions], they [the Israelis] would go crazy and say we were encouraging terrorism.”

Related:

Abbas attacks Israel, Hamas over PA economic woes

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s spokesman Mark Regev said that to imply that the government was “anything but totally opposed to vigilante violence is an atrocious perversion of the truth.” Regev said that Netanyahu dismissed Abbas’s statements as “ridiculous.”



Netanyahu, as well as the country’s top leadership from President Shimon Peres down, roundly condemned a recent spate of attacks that included a firebomb attack

near Bat Ayin, the beating of an Arab youth in Jerusalem and the vandalism at the Latrun Monastery.

“Insinuating that the Israeli government is supportive of these acts is not only the opposite of the truth, but sends a message of hatred, confrontation and demonization of Israel,” Regev said. “This is the opposite of what the [PA] leadership should be doing.”

Regev pointed out that those responsible for the attack on a Palestinian taxi near Bat Ayin on August 16 and the brutal attack on a Arab youth in Jerusalem’s Zion Square in the early hours of August 18 have been arrested. Abbas’s allegations are baseless, he said, but they are dangerous when coming from the Palestinian leadership.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=284473>

- **Montreal mayor makes historic visit to Israel**

Arriving with a large business and academic delegation, Montreal mayor Tremblay's visit is 1st of its kind in nearly 20 years.

Montreal Mayor Gérald Tremblay arrived in Israel Friday with a large business and academic delegation coincidentally on the day that Canada decided to cut off ties with Iran.

This is the first visit by a Montreal mayor in nearly 20 years.

The 50-plus delegation also includes heads of the Montreal chamber of commerce, hi-tech entrepreneurs, textile and cosmetic factory owners, the assistant deans at McGill University and the Université de Montreal and a number of academics.

“Israeli culture is very similar to our own,” Tremblay said.

“We hope to develop sustainable, mutually beneficial business ties. We can get inspiration from the Israeli innovation model that binds the private sector, the universities and government offices.”

Israel’s consul-general in Montreal, Yoel Lion, said the trip began to come together after Tremblay read the 2009 book Start-

up Nation: The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle.

“A visit like this with such a large delegation strengthens even more the existing connection between Israel and Canada, Quebec and Montreal,” he said.

“We have a lot to offer them and I am glad that we succeeded in convincing the mayor and the delegation members to come learn from our experience and promote cooperation in academics, innovation and hitech.”

During the six-day trip, the delegation will meet President Shimon Peres, Tourism Minister Stas Meseznikov and leading figures in hi-tech and Israeli academia.

Tremblay will also meet with the mayors of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa and Beersheba.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=284464>

- **J'lem welcomes EU move to intensify Iran sanctions**

Peres, Italian PM Monti agree that military option on Iran must remain on the table in

case non-military tactics exhausted, PERES meets with Italian Prime Minister Mario Mont Photo: Amit Frenkel/President's Bureau

Israel welcomes the initiative of the EU to intensify sanctions against Iran, President Shimon Peres told Prime Minister Mario Monti in Italy on Sunday.



The two men were holding a working session within the framework of the annual International Ambrosetti Economic Forum at Villa d'Este on the shores of Lake Como.

Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi briefed Peres on Rome's position on Iran. Terzi visited Israel last week before the president's departure for Italy.

Monti told Peres that Italy was duty bound to prevent Iran from building its nuclear arsenal.

The two leaders agreed that every possible non-military pressure tactic should be exerted on Tehran with the aim of persuading its government to backtrack on its nuclear project, but if all options failed, a military solution should remain on the table.

Peres said he was glad to see that Italy was part of the troika (together with Germany and France), which was leading the EU toward the imposition of tougher sanctions against Iran.

Peres emphasized the importance of a united front in battling the Iranian nuclear threat. He also discussed with Monti the dramatic move on Friday by Canada in severing diplomatic relations with Iran, and said that in addition to such steps severe economic pressure should be placed on the Islamic Republic in the oil and banking sectors.

Peres and Monti are longtime friends with a strong mutual respect. Peres particularly admires Monti's savvy in the field of economics.

He congratulated Monti on initiatives that he had undertaken within the EU and for the future of Italy, and voiced the hope that Europe would soon emerge from its economic crisis. Monti said that there were already faint signs of recovery.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=284474>

- **PM: Ariel is integral part of Israel, always will be**

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Sunday asserted his support for upgrading to university status the Ariel University Center of Samaria in the West Bank.

Netanyahu was speaking at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting. "Ariel is an integral part of Israel and will remain as such in any future agreement," he said.

"The establishment of the university serves to strengthen higher education in Israel. Seven universities is not enough. It is important to have another university, and it is important that this will be Ariel," the prime minister added.

The government on Sunday is expected to endorse the upgrade and the appointment

of Shai Nitzan to the post of deputy attorney-general for special projects.

Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar was due to bring forward the Ariel proposal, which calls for all necessary steps to be taken to execute the July decision by the Council for Higher Education in Judea and Samaria for the upgrade, saying it is of "national importance."

The upgrade would bring the number of the country's accredited universities to eight. Sa'ar said an eighth university "would enhance Israel's education system."

There is a petition against the upgrade pending before the High Court of Justice.

Given that the matter is now a legal issue, a decision by the government would be non-binding and would not in and of itself change the institution's status.

However, the government is expected to issue a binding decision on a request by Justice Minister Yaakov Neeman with regard to Nitzan.

Right-wing politicians oppose the appointment, saying Nitzan acted against settlers when he headed the ministry's criminal law division for Judea and Samaria.

The head of Habayit Hayehudi, Science and Technology Minister Daniel Herschkowitz, said Saturday night that he would vote against the appointment.

“There is a crisis of trust between the state attorney's office and the settlers,” Herschkowitz said. “Appointing Nitzan to deal with sensitive matters will only deepen this crisis.”

MK Uri Ariel (National Union) has called on cabinet ministers to oppose the appointment. MK Tzipi Hotovely (Likud) is collecting signatures to bring the issue of Nitzan's appointment to the Knesset, warning that it would introduce a “Trojan horse” into the attorney-general's office and strengthen the imposition of political stances on the Likud government.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=284384>

- **Abbas attacks Israel, Hamas over PA economic woes**

PA president clarifies no date set for UN application; protesters surround PA Prime Minister Fayyad's car, calling on him to resign.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Saturday reacted to ongoing protests against the high cost of living in the Palestinian territories by attacking Israel and Hamas.

He also said that he would go the UN General Assembly on September 27 “to consult with friends” about upgrading the status of a Palestinian state in the international agency to non-member.

However, Abbas did not say that he would submit a request to the General Assembly in this regard. No date has been set for filing the application to the UN, he clarified.

Abbas's remarks were made during a press conference he held in Ramallah.

Abbas rejected calls for firing PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

“I’m the first to be held responsible for the situation in the West Bank and Fayyad is part of the Palestinian Authority,” he said. “He should not be held fully responsible.”

Abbas reiterated his determination to renew his statehood bid at the UN later this month.

“We are going to the UN to say that we are a state that is subject to the Fourth Geneva Convention and there are 133 countries that recognize a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital,” he declared. “Why doesn’t Washington want us to go to the UN?” Abbas accused Hamas of seeking to establish an Islamic emirate in the Gaza Strip.

He also indirectly criticized Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy for receiving Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in Cairo last month.

Those who dealt with Haniyeh as a prime minister were deepening divisions among the Palestinians, the PA president said. “Ismail Haniyeh is not the prime minister,” he said.

There were about 2,000 tunnels between the Gaza Strip and Egypt that had produced 1,000 Palestinian millionaires, he said.

Noting that half of the PA’s budget was going to the Gaza Strip, Abbas held Hamas responsible for the failure of efforts to end the power struggle with his Fatah faction.

He also held Israel responsible for the economic crisis.

The Palestinians, he added, were not free “because we are being surrounded from all directions. The borders are under their [Israel’s] control.”

Israel was hindering efforts to achieve a two-state solution by continuing to build in the settlements and east Jerusalem, he said. “Israel wants to Judaize Jerusalem and all the Palestinian territories,” he charged.

Abbas complained that the Palestinians were unable to exploit 60 percent of their lands because of Israeli restrictions – a reference to Area C of the West Bank that is under Israel’s exclusive control.

He also hinted that the PA might cancel the 1994 Paris Economic Agreement between the PLO and Israel.

Abbas warned that he would take “unthinkable” steps if Israel continued with its current policies, but did not elaborate.

Protests that are sweeping the West Bank would be allowed to continue as long as they were peaceful, he said, but he warned that the PA would not allow the protests to plunge the Palestinian territories into chaos.

Abbas revealed that a man who tried to set himself on fire in Ramallah last week because of the economic situation had actually poured water, and not gasoline, on his body. Abbas said that the man, who claimed that he “had nothing,” had received financial aid from the Palestinians and from Jordan.

The PA president responded to Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman’s campaign against him by declaring: “Liberman is asking me to leave and I will not leave. We will not repeat the mistake we made in

1948 and 1967. We are here to stay in our homeland.”

Nabil Sha’ath, a senior Fatah official, also dismissed calls for the resignation of Fayyad, saying such a move would not help solve the economic crisis.

“Fayyad is not an angel and he may have made mistakes,” Sha’ath said. “But he is not the reason for our poverty and suffering and why we cannot travel to Jerusalem and Gaza.”

Meanwhile, scores of angry protesters surrounded Fayyad’s car in Ramallah, holding him responsible for the crisis and calling on him to resign.

The incident took place outside the studio of a local radio station, where Fayyad had been interviewed about the crisis. PA policemen had to interfere to ensure Fayyad’s safe exit from the studio.

During the interview, the PA prime minister reiterated his readiness to quit if such a move would help solve the crisis.

In response to Abbas’s remarks, Hamas accused the PA president of trying to avoid responsibility for the crisis.

Salah Bardaweel, a top Hamas official in the Gaza Strip, said Abbas was trying to divert attention from his problems at home by launching an attack on the Islamist movement and others.

Abbas’s accusation reflected his “bankruptcy,” said Taher a-Nunu, spokesman for the Hamas government.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=284318>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Youth of Ennahdha Protest to “Put Pressure on The Government”**

Thousands of people gathered this morning in Al Kasbah square in Tunis to put pressure on the government to enact serious reforms. The protest came as a response to the call of the Ekbes campaign, launched by youth in support of Tunisia’s ruling party, Ennahdha.

“We called for this protest today in order to put pressure on the government to

achieve the goals of the revolution. Not only Ennahdha followers joined the protest, but also people from other parties, activists, and civil society members,” said Mousaab Ben Ammar, spokesperson of Ekbes campaign.

Ekbes, which literally means ‘to tighten,’ is a campaign that was launched less than a month ago by some young members of Ennahdha. The aim is to critique the government for not being serious enough in achieving the goals of the Revolution.



Slogans, such as “Cleaning all sectors is not a favor” and “Government, wake up,” were chanted during the protest. Ben Ammar said that the government needs to take concrete measures in order to fight corruption and make reforms.

“This is only the beginning. There will be more protests if the government does not

start making reforms in areas of the judiciary, media, and Ministry of the Interior. We demand the exclusion of former RCD (Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's party) members from the political spectrum for ten years. We are also calling for the implementation of general legislative amnesty, which will result in former political prisoners regaining their rights," added Ben Ammar.

Ben Ammar added that even though the founders of Ekbes campaign are members of Ennahdha, supporters of the campaign are from different sections of society.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/09/07/youth-of-ennahdha-protest-to-put-pressure-on-the-government/>

- **Head of Islamist Ennahdha Party to File Suit Against "The Independent"**

Rached Ghannouchi, leader of Tunisia's moderate Islamist Ennahdha party, stated yesterday that he intends to sue the British newspaper The Independent for publishing false information about his party.

In his article entitled, "We believe that the USA is the major player against Syria and the rest are its instruments," Robert Fisk quoted Walid Muallem, foreign minister to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as saying that the Emir of Qatar, Hamad ben Khalifa Al Thani, issued orders to pay Ennahdha \$150 million to help Ghannouchi's party in the elections.



Ghannouchi denied the news during a press conference held yesterday and announced that he plans to sue The Independent for publishing inaccurate information.

"Robert Fisk is a respectable man, but in his article he published false news. These are serious accusations, and we are going to sue the newspaper for publishing that," said the Ennahdha leader.

Ghannouchi further alleged that the reason fueling Muallem’s accusations was Tunisia’s support to the Syrian people and their revolution.

“Tunisia was the first Arab country to fire the Syrian ambassador. It also held the first ‘Friends of Syria’ conference...No wonder that these words come from a man that is involved with a regime that is killing its own people,” added Ghannouchi.

Fisk’s article was the first interview that Assad’s foreign minister gave to western journalists since the Syrian conflict began. During the interview, Muallem said that the Emir of Qatar gave Ghannouchi \$150 million to support Ennahdha during Tunisia’s October 2011 elections.

“At the same time, when I was waiting to enter a meeting [with the Emir of Qatar], there was the head of the Tunisian Ennahdha party, and the emir issued orders to pay Ennahdha \$150 million to help his party in the elections. Anyway, this was their business,” stated Muallem.

Tunisia’s Ennahdha party won the country’s first elections after former

dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was ousted from the country. Since the elections, Ennahdha has governed the country in coalition with other two center-left parties – the Congress for the Republic and Ettakatol.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/08/31/head-of-islamist-ennahdha-party-to-file-suit-against-the-independent/>

- **Opposition Party Activists Reportedly Assaulted by Religious Extremists**

Yesterday, a group of Tunisian women affiliated with the leftist Nidaa Tounes – the Call of Tunisia party – reported that they were verbally and physically assaulted during a meeting held in the small town of Menzel Chakeur, located in the governorate of Sfax.



In an interview with Tunisia Live, Adel Chaouch, a representative of Nidaa Tounes, confirmed the news and condemned the attack on his fellow party members. According to Chaouch, “A group of Salafists who belong to the Council of Protecting the Revolution,” were responsible for the assault. Chaouch said that some women were physically injured and required hospitalization, while others suffered from emotional trauma.

Chaouch stated his conviction that the incident was politically motivated, alleging that members of Nidaa Tounes have been previously threatened by Islamist, pro-government activists. According to Chaouch, these individuals claim that the left-wing movement has ties with the

former ruling party of the Ben Ali regime, the RCD.

“This group of people is a group of terrorists. They’ve established themselves as the ‘conscience of society’ or a parallel police force ... It is dangerous and unacceptable,” he stated. According to Chaouch, such incidents are a threat not only to the democratic transition that the country has been undergoing, but also to the security of the public as well.

The same source reiterated that the Tunisian government must be held accountable for protecting civilians. Nidaa Tounes officials are currently preparing to file a complaint in protest of the incident.

Nidaa Tounes is an initiative launched by Beji Caied Essebsi, a veteran politician who led Tunisia’s transitional government following the ouster of former President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. A number of opposition parties have coalesced around the political movement since it was founded.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/08/31/left-wing-party->

[activists-reportedly-assaulted-by-religious-extremists/](#)

- **Party in Governing Coalition Elects New Secretary General**



Mohamed Abbou has been elected as the new secretary general of the center-left Congress for the Republic (CPR) party. The results were announced today on the official website of the party, which became a member of the tripartite coalition government last November.

Two candidates ran for the position of Secretary General of CPR, following the withdrawal of Imed Daimi and Makram Ben Khalifa from the race.

“I preferred to withdraw to preserve the unity of the party,” Daimi stated. Daimi blamed “certain parties” for striving to sow discord between him and Mohamed

Abbou, formerly the interim secretary general of CPR.

A debate was held yesterday between Abbou his remaining opponent in the race, Walid Haddouk.

Daimi, who is also the director of the Presidential Cabinet, told TAP news agency that he was not aware of any additional applicants for the position of Secretary General of CPR. According to Hedi Ben Abbess, the spokesperson of CPR, the press conference that had previously been scheduled for Sunday morning to review progress made during the various committee sessions comprising the three-day CPR conference was canceled to afford the congress more time to discuss pending motions.

Daimi asserted that appointing a new secretary general of the party through these elections “will lead to democratic leadership of the party.”

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/08/27/party-in-governing-coalition-elects-new-secretary-general/>

- **Questions of Legitimacy as First Anniversary of National Constituent Assembly Creation Approaches**

The approaching first anniversary of the election of Tunisia’s National Constituent Assembly (NCA) has generated a heated debate among political parties, representatives of civil society, and private citizens. As the deadline for submitting the final draft of the Tunisian Constitution has not yet been determined, questions concerning the continued legitimacy of the NCA have reverberated throughout Tunisian society.

The National Constituent Assembly took shape following Tunisia’s NCA elections on October 23, 2011. While some believe that the body’s mission must end by October 23 of this year, others believe that the assembly’s legitimacy is related to the progress made on the Constitution, the NCA’s primary task.

Zoubair Chehoudi, spokesperson of Ennahda – the party currently holding a majority of seats in the NCA- told Tunisia Live today that a predetermined deadline cannot be imposed on members of the assembly, since by virtue of the 2011 elections, they represent the wishes of

Tunisian citizens. “People need to give the assembly a chance to finish its mission. We need to be more patient, especially since they [NCA members] led an impressive journey so far,” he explained. Chehoudi added that only members of the assembly can reach a general consensus about a specific deadline to end their mission.

In an interview with Tunisia Live, constitutional law professor Kais Said recalled that the former Tunisian Interim President Fouad Mebazaa decided on August 3, 2011 that the legitimacy of the National Constituent Assembly would last for one year. At the same time, Said explained that Mebazaa’s decision no longer carries weight, as he is no longer functioning as Tunisia’s interim president. “The former president doesn’t have any legitimacy anymore. He was the only authority behind the one-year statement,” Said added, clarifying that the conflict is a political one, and not legislative.



According to Said, the NCA itself must determine a clear date when the Constitution will be ready, as the NCA's mission is temporary. However, ending the assembly's task before it is ready could threaten Tunisia's security and stability, Said attested. "If the Constituent Assembly loses its legitimacy by October 23, who will run this country?"

Mouldi Fehem, a member of the executive bureau of the Republican Party – a prominent opposition coalition – said that consensus among not only members of the NCA, but also within Tunisia's political scene in general, is crucial. "Our party just finished a meeting of the central committee today, and we agreed on creating a political road map that we will present to other parties and independent politicians in order to reach a consensus over this matter," he explained.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/09/09/questions-of-legitimacy-as-first-anniversary-of-national-constituent-assembly-creation-approaches/>

- **Update: First football match since Port Said goes ahead despite protests**

General Khaled Ghoraba Alexandria Security Director, checks security measures in front of Borg al-Arab Stadium, 9 September 2012, before Super match between Ahly and ENPI.

The inaugural match of the Super Cup, between the Ahly and ENPI clubs, began at 9 pm on Sunday at Borg al-Arab stadium in Alexandria, despite protests from some football fans to cancel football matches until justice is attained for the victims of the Port Said Stadium violence last February.

The players arrived at the stadium an hour beforehand amid tight security.

Alexandria security forces had earlier expressed reservations about their preparedness to secure the match. The match was set to begin at 8 pm, but local

security said they would need one extra hour to secure it.

Alexandria Governor Khaled Ghoraba had said the match would be played on time, but no spectators would be allowed in the vicinity of 6.5 kilometers from the stadium. Earlier Sunday, thousands of the Ultras Ahlawy, a group of hardcore Ahly Club football fans, marched to Borg al-Arab Stadium, where the match is set to be played, threatening to stop the match by force.

President Mohamed Morsy's spokesperson said at a press conference earlier Sunday that the president was not responsible for deciding whether the match would be played. The match is the first official Egyptian football match since the Port Said Stadium violence in February.

"It is up to the Sports Ministry to cancel or allow the match to be played," spokesperson Yasser Ali said.

Sports Minister Al-Emary Farouq insisted Saturday that the match would go ahead. He also criticized Ahly player Mohamed

Abu Treika for refusing to play, in solidarity with the ultras.

Early last February, 74 were killed and hundreds injured after fans of the local Port Said football team, Masry, stormed the field following a rare victory.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/update-first-football-match-port-said-goes-ahead-despite-protests>

- **Cairo Criminal Court postpones NGO funding case to 2 October**

Judge Makram Awwad, NGO trial's new judge, after the previous bench of three judges resigned, during the session in Cairo Criminal Court, March 8, 2012. The trial is set to continue on 10 April.

Tarek Wageeh

The Cairo Criminal Court on Sunday adjourned the sixth session in the trial of 43 foreign and Egyptian NGO workers until 2 October, when testimony from defense witnesses will be heard. The defendants are accused of illegally receiving foreign funding and operating in Egypt without permission from the authorities.

Fayza Abouelnaga, the former planning and international cooperation minister who instigated this case, was one of the high-profile prosecution witnesses giving testimony. According to Al-Masry Al-Youm, she said that the NGOs in question threatened national security through their activities and trained youths in demonstrating, insulting police and attacking state institutions.

Among the accused are 19 American citizens, 14 Egyptians and 10 other non-Egyptian nationals. Security forces raided the NGO offices in December 2011, confiscating material and straining diplomatic ties with the US, putting American aid money to Egypt at stake.

Following the diplomatic row, the travel ban imposed on the NGO workers was lifted in late February, after which most foreign nationals that were accused left the country. The ruling sparked controversy and prompted judges to question the independence of the Egyptian judiciary from pressure exerted by the US government and the then-ruling military council.

In Sunday's and previous court sessions, most foreign nationals were absent. Earlier, the trial was adjourned to give defense attorneys the chance to investigate confiscated material. The last session, held on 5 July, was abruptly adjourned after one witness testified.

Sherif Mansour, one of the accused US citizens who left after the travel ban was lifted, returned in June to stand trial and attended Sunday's court session.

"It is evident that it is a flawed case, because none of the witnesses could come up with evidence when asked by the lawyers," he said. He quoted Abouelnaga as saying her evidence was her "analytical review of the situation in Egypt."

Gasser Abdel Raziq, a lawyer for the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, called the case's context "disturbing."

"There are political forces who are trying to preserve Mubarak-era laws dating from 2002 in forming legislation around NGOs," he said.

These laws, he added, require approval from seven government institutions,

among them the security apparatus, to grant NGOs a legal status.

“It is not right to let these institutions determine the fate of civil society organizations, because the Interior Ministry or the General Intelligence Services can easily object on the basis of national security.”

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/cairo-criminal-court-postpones-ngo-funding-case-2-october>

- **Over half of Egyptians want female vice president, says poll**



More than half of the Egyptian population would like to see a woman appointed vice president, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research, which is affiliated with Al-Masry Al-Youm.

The poll showed that 55.2 percent of the population supports seeing a woman as vice president. Of those polled, 55.7 percent of men and 54.6 percent of women were in support.

In addition, 61.1 percent of urban residents compared to 49.1 percent of rural residents, and 68.2 percent with a college education or higher compared to 48.9 percent with a smaller education background, were in support.

The poll was conducted over mobile phones on 11 July and sampled 2,065 citizens aged 18 years and older. The center reported a response rate of 90 percent and margin of error of less than 3 percent.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/over-half-egyptians-want-female-vice-president-says-poll>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Berri transfers electoral draft law to parliamentary committees**

Speaker Nabih Berri on Monday transferred the draft electoral law to the

relevant parliamentary committees, the National News Agency reported on Monday.

Berri also transferred to the committees a draft electoral law submitted by Change and Reform bloc MP Neemtallah Abi Nasr and MP Alain Aoun based on proportional representation within one electoral district that only allows Lebanese citizens to vote for MPs who belong to their sect.

The NNA also reported that Berri met with Prime Minister Najib Miqati at the former's residence in Ain al-Tineh and discussed the latest local and regional developments.

Last month, the cabinet approved an electoral law based on proportionality and 13 electoral districts for the 2013 parliamentary elections. It seeks to replace the 1960 electoral law, which was based on simple majority representation.

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

- **Lebanon will not allow itself to be destabilized, Miqati says**

Prime Minister Najib Miqati warned on Monday that Lebanon will act if there are attempts to destabilize it from Syria.

“When there are attempts to [harm] Lebanon from Syria, we will not dissociate ourselves and we will take the necessary measures,” Miqati told reporters at the Grand Serail in Downtown Beirut.

Commenting on the case of ex-Information Minister Michel Samaha, the premier said that the former's confessions “confirm the incident” linked to explosives happened.

He added that he was awaiting the final results of the investigation.

On August 9, Lebanese security forces arrested Samaha, who has close ties with Syria's embattled regime, with smuggling weapons into Lebanon in a bid to foment terrorist plots. Two Syrian army officers, including Syrian National Security Chief General Ali Mamluk, were also indicted by the Lebanese judiciary for their involvement in the plot.

On the release of the army officers implicated in the killing of Sunni cleric

Ahmad Abdel Wahed and his bodyguard Mohammad Hussein Merheb, Miqati said the officers were released upon a judicial decision and added that the move did not mean “the trial ended.”

In May, army troops shot dead Abdel Wahed and Merheb, when their convoy allegedly failed to stop at a checkpoint in North Lebanon. Last week, the Lebanese Military Court of Cassation released three army officers implicated in the case on \$200 bail each.

The premier also addressed the case of the Lebanese Shiite pilgrims kidnapped in Syria in May and said Turkey was making “serious mediations” to help release them and added “the abductees will be released very soon and [this may happen] in stages.”

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

- **Nasri Khoury warns of attempts to harm Syrian-Lebanese relations**

Lebanese-Syrian Higher Council Secretary General Nasri Khoury warned of attempts to harm ties between Syria and Lebanon.

“There are attempts to create tensions in the official relations between the two countries for political aims,” Khoury said in remarks published Monday in As-Safir newspaper.

He also said that diplomatic channels were the means to resolve “problems” calmly and away from “political investment.”

“My duties as [the council’s] secretary general is to [inform] politicians in both countries of the developments on the level of [state] relations. It is not my task to deliver messages from one president to another. That is the task of the ambassadors,” Khoury added.

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

6. SYRIA

- **UN-Arab League envoy on Syria to travel to Tehran**

TEHRAN – Lakhdar Brahimi, the new UN-Arab League joint special envoy on Syria, plans to pay a visit to Tehran at the earliest opportunity, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian and Oceanian Affairs Abbas Araqchi told the Persian

service of the Mehr News Agency on Sunday.

Commenting on the Syrian crisis, Araqchi emphasized that political dialogue is the only solution to the crisis.

He also said that Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi had a telephone conversation with Brahimi on Saturday night, during which the two sides discussed the latest developments in Syria.



Iran can play positive role in resolving Syrian crisis

During the conversation, Brahimi emphasized that Iran can play a positive role in resolving the Syrian crisis and said that he hopes all the parties involved in the crisis will cooperate to restore peace in the country.

Salehi congratulated Brahimi on his appointment as the new special envoy on Syria and expressed hope that he would successfully fulfill his duty.

Salehi said that the Islamic Republic supports a Syrian-Syrian solution to the crisis and is keen to help efforts to restore peace in Syria.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/101363-un-arab-league-envoy-on-syria-to-travel-to-tehran>

- **Syrian jets blitz rebel Aleppo bastions, NGO says**

Syrian warplanes Monday blitzed a string of opposition-held districts in Aleppo, a watchdog said, a day after rebels killed dozens including soldiers in an attack on state buildings in the northern city.

At least five people died and an unknown number were hurt when the warplanes staged waves of bombing raids from early morning on the Marjeh, Sakhur, Hanano, Tariq al-Bab and Sheikh Khodr neighborhoods, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.



"Many buildings were destroyed and the rebels used anti-aircraft guns" against the warplanes, said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a network of activists on the ground for its information.

Abdel Rahman gave a toll of at least 27 people killed in Sunday's attack by rebels on government buildings in a western district of Aleppo, near the municipal stadium.

"It appears that many soldiers were among the dead, and that there were a number of people were wounded, some of the seriously," he added.

The official SANA news agency, which blamed the attack on "terrorists," gave the same death toll and said 64 people were wounded.

Elsewhere in the conflict-torn country, five civilians were killed and dozens hurt when regime forces shelled rebel areas of the capital Damascus near Sayeda Zeinab, an important Shiite pilgrimage shrine, the Observatory said.

Deadly violence also flared in Daraa province, where a mother and her child were killed, as well as in the central province of Hama, the Observatory said, giving an initial toll of 15 people killed countryside so far on Monday.

It said that on Sunday 160 people were killed -- 108 civilians, 22 rebels et 30 government soldiers -- adding to a toll of more than 27,000 people killed since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in March last year.

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

- **Peace envoy Brahimi in Cairo on Syria mission**

UN and Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi arrived in Cairo on Sunday where he will hold talks with League officials ahead of an expected visit to Damascus, an airport official said.

Brahimi came from New York via Paris for what is his first visit to the region after taking up his appointment in early September as the peace envoy for Syria, replacing former UN chief Kofi Annan.

The veteran troubleshooter has said he was "scared" of the mission awaiting him in Syria, and has described the bloodshed there as "staggering" and the destruction as "catastrophic."

Brahimi was appointed as the international envoy for Syria after Annan quit in frustration at divisions within the UN Security Council on the deadly violence that has gripped the country for nearly 18 months.

Annan stepped down as international efforts to end the conflict faltered, and with no signs of the bloodshed ending, there are low expectations that Algeria's former foreign minister will have any more success than his predecessor.

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

• **Brahimi kickstarts 'scary' Syria mission**

UN and Arab League peace envoy meets with Egypt, League leaders for talks on Syrian conflict.

CAIRO - UN and Arab League peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi on Monday begins his Syria mission by meeting League officials and senior Egyptian leaders before heading to Damascus on his first official trip to the region.

Brahimi, replacing former UN chief Kofi Annan who quit over divisions in the UN Security Council on the deadly violence that has gripped Syria for nearly 18 months, arrived in Cairo late on Sunday from New York via Paris.

Annan stepped down as international efforts to end the conflict faltered, and with no signs of the bloodshed ending, expectations are low that Algeria's former foreign minister will have any more success than his predecessor.

More than 27,000 people have been killed since the Syrian conflict erupted in March last year, according to the Syrian

Observatory for Human Rights. The United Nations puts the death toll at 20,000.

Brahimi, a veteran troubleshooter, has already said he was "scared" of the mission awaiting him in Syria, and has described the bloodshed there as "staggering" and the destruction as "catastrophic."

Brahimi's spokesman Ahmad Fawzi told reporters at Cairo airport the peace envoy will meet Egypt's Islamist President Mohamed Morsi, Foreign Minister Mohammed Kamel Amr, League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi and other officials on Monday.

Fawzi said the date of Brahimi's visit to Syria will be fixed once the final details of his programme of meetings are set.

Brahimi's mission begins with key Security Council members the United States and Russia split on how to tackle the conflict and as fighting rages, with dozens of people dying in Syria every day.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on Sunday that a new Security Council resolution on Syria would be pointless if it

had "no teeth," because President Bashar al-Assad would ignore it.

Speaking in Russia, Clinton said she was willing to work with Moscow on a new resolution but warned that Washington would step up support to end Assad's regime if the measure did not carry consequences.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after meeting Clinton that he hoped to seek Security Council approval for a peace plan agreed in June in Geneva that called for a ceasefire and political transition.

Clinton said if differences with Moscow persist, "then we will work with like-minded states to support a Syrian opposition to hasten the day when Assad falls."



Washington has said it is providing non-lethal assistance to the opposition in Syria, whose regime has been a Moscow ally since the Cold War.

As part of his diplomatic push, Brahimi may try to enlist Iran. In Tehran the Mehr news agency quoted an official as saying Brahimi was contemplating visiting the Islamic republic -- Syria's diehard ally -- after Damascus.

Annan had also visited Tehran to try to get it involved in finding an end to the bloodshed, but Washington has accused Iran of playing a "nefarious" role in Syria.

Arab leaders, meanwhile, have denounced the Syrian regime for carrying out "crimes against humanity."

Arab foreign ministers on Wednesday condemned "the pursuit of violence, killings and ugly crimes carried out by the Syrian authorities and their shabiha militias against Syrian civilians."

Even as the latest diplomatic push to resolve the crisis unfolds, the fighting in Syria continues unabated, with scores of people reported killed.

The conflict has also triggered a massive exodus, with current Syrian refugee numbers in neighbouring countries now 235,000, according to official UN figures.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54280>

- **EU ministers agree to beef up sanctions against Assad regime**

European foreign ministers urge fractured Syrian opposition to unite, agree to try to work with Russia in efforts to find peaceful solution to conflict.

EU foreign ministers agreed on the need to beef up sanctions against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime at talks in Cyprus on Saturday, said Cypriot Foreign Minister Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis.

"There is consensus also on the increase of sanctions in Syria," she said, after announcing that the bloc's 27 ministers were agreed on the need to massively strengthen humanitarian aid.

Meeting on an island as close as 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Syria for their

first talks since the summer break, the ministers also urged the fractured Syrian opposition to unite and agreed to try to work with Russia in efforts to find a peaceful solution to the 18-month conflict.

The Cypriot minister said European nations believed it was important to work with Moscow, Assad's main diplomatic and military supporter, despite anger over Russia and China vetoing three UN Security Council attempts to exert more pressure on Syria.

"We have to continue to work with Russia because we want to have them on board," she said.

Belgium's foreign policy chief, Didier Reynders, suggested one way of working with Russia would be to set up an international observer mission to ensure Syrian hospitals were kept open to the injured from both sides of the conflict.

In remarks to journalists at the close of two days of informal talks, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius too insisted on the need to respect humanitarian rights

by maintaining hospital care open to all Syrians.

Regarding punitive action against the regime, Fabius said "if we want things to move, we must reinforce sanctions against the clan of (President) Bashar al-Assad."

Details on new measures would be worked out by the office of EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, he said.

"There is a general feeling that more pressure must be placed on the regime in order to end the violence and enable the distribution of humanitarian aid throughout the country," added Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia Margallo.

Ashton urged the Syrian opposition to collaborate.

"It's important that the people, whoever they are, feel they are part of that future," she said.

Brussels on Friday announced an extra 50 million euros (\$63 million) for civilians trapped in the conflict, bringing the EU

contribution in all to 200 million euros, half of all international help.

"Humanitarian needs are rising rapidly," said British Foreign Secretary William Hague. "We need additional contributions to the human effort urgently."



The United Nations on Friday almost doubled its humanitarian appeal for Syria to \$347 million, estimating that more than 2.5 million people need food and medical help in the country.

More than 1.2 million, more than half of them children, have become internally displaced in Syria, and some 200,000 refugees are massed in neighbours Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

The informal brain-storming held in a classy Cypriot resort will set the tone

within the EU for the weeks and months to come.

Hague said in a letter to Ashton that Europe needed to play a bigger role in resolving the Syrian crisis.

His counterparts from France and Italy, Fabius and Giulio Terzi, said in a separate message to Ashton that the crisis was at "a turning-point" and called for an extraordinary meeting of EU foreign ministers in New York this month on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

They said that should the EU fail to help resolve the crisis, Europe's security could be threatened from problems ranging from terror, arms proliferation and illegal immigration to energy security.

Europe's answer to the challenge thrown up by potential migration flows and asylum seekers was to help countries such as Turkey and Jordan host the refugees on Syria's border, ministers said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54265>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **High oil price not justified by market fundamentals, says Saudi Arabia**

Saudi oil minister Ali al-Naimi said on Monday the high price of crude was not justified by market fundamentals, stressing that supply and demand are balanced.

"Saudi Arabia is concerned about rising oil prices in the international oil market. The current high price of oil is simply not supported by market fundamentals," he said in a statement.

"The market is well balanced, forward cover remains within an acceptable range and inventories are more than adequate," Naimi added.

He said the oil-rich kingdom remains ready to ensure adequate supply of oil to the international market.

"Saudi Arabia will, as always, take all necessary steps to ensure the market is well supplied and to help moderate prices - and we will meet any additional demand from our customers," he said.

"We will continue to work in collaboration with other Gulf Cooperation Council nations, and with OPEC to defend the stability of the oil market," he added.

Oil prices were mixed in Asia Monday as traders balanced US stimulus hopes with disappointing Chinese industrial output numbers, analysts said.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in October, shed 26 cents to \$96.16 a barrel while Brent North Sea crude for October delivery gained 15 cents to \$114.40.

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

- **Bahraini police shoot Shiite protester, says opposition**

Bahraini security forces opened fire on protesters in a Shiite village, wounding and later arresting a member of its municipal council, the opposition group Al-Wefaq said.

Police fired shotguns to disperse a "peaceful demonstration" late on Sunday in the village of Sitra, south of Manama,

Al-Wefaq said, adding that Sadiq Rabie, who represents the group in the council, was hit in the back.

The opposition group said in a statement that Rabie was led away by police from a private hospital.

A picture it provided showed the right arm and shoulder of Rabie covered with bloody marks from shotgun pellets, as well as blood in his ear.

The Sunni-ruled kingdom, home to the US Fifth Fleet and strategically situated across the Gulf from Iran, has continued to witness sporadic Shiite-led demonstrations, mostly outside the capital, since it crushed a protest movement in a bloody crackdown in March of last year.

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

- **Eight wanted Al-Qaeda suspects surrender, says Saudi ministry**

Eight Saudis wanted for alleged links to Al-Qaeda have handed themselves in to the authorities, the state news agency SPA reported on Sunday.

The surrender was overseen by the families of those wanted and a center headed by Deputy Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef, the Interior Ministry said in a statement carried by SPA.

The center launched in 2006 aims to draw former Al-Qaeda militants away from radical Islamist ideology.

The Interior Ministry urged others "to return to their senses and to stop following those who seek to use them as tools."

On August 26, Saudi authorities announced they had foiled a terror plot by elements suspected of links to Al-Qaeda, mostly Yemenis, and busted two extremist cells in Riyadh and the port city of Jeddah.

They said the suspects were working on "recruiting elements to execute criminal attacks targeting security forces, citizens and foreign residents, as well as public installations."

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

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Report: US, Britain Plotting to Disintegrate Afghanistan**

Fars News Agency

September 9, 2012

TEHRAN (FNA)- Reports from the western media outlets revealed on Sunday that the US and Britain are studying plans to disintegrate Afghanistan and carve it into eight separate regions, a plot seen by experts as Washington and London's attempt to empower Taliban in the war-torn country.

The UK weekly, Independent on Sunday, reported that Afghanistan could be carved into eight separate parts - with some of them potentially ruled by the Taliban - according to a controversial plan under discussion in London and Washington.

Code-named 'Plan C', the radical blueprint for the future of Afghanistan sets out plans that would relegate President Hamid Karzai to a figurehead role.

The plan is devised by the Conservative MP and Foreign Office aide Tobias Ellwood.

Senior government sources confirmed that Plan C - Finding a political solution to Afghanistan had been presented to the Foreign Secretary, William Hague, and discussed with officials at the White House. Mr. Ellwood, a former captain in the Royal Green Jackets, has also discussed the plan with Pakistani government officials in London.

But experts criticized the attempt, and insisted that coalition leaders should be concentrating on a military exit strategy that would enable them to withdraw their forces by the 2014 deadline.

Wazhma Frogh, executive director of Afghanistan's Research Institute for Women, Peace and Security, said, "Who is the British MP sitting in London and deciding for Afghanistan? It should be us, the people of this country, deciding if we want to divide into states or collapse as a nation. I am surprised to see an MP of a democratic country creating the future and showing solutions for a country in which he doesn't have to live and where his children will not have to live."

The plan divides Afghanistan into eight zones, based around the "economic hubs" of Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz, Jalalabad, Khost and Bamyan. The areas would be administered by a council representing different ethnic groups and overseen by one or more foreign countries.

Thomas Ruttig, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network, said, "Splitting the country into such regions will result in the empowerment of what we have started calling 'local (or regional) power brokers' and what was known as 'warlords' before, whose misrule between 1992 and 1996 caused the rise of the Taliban in the first place."

The US and Britain have always been in secret talks with Taliban to empower them and create chaos in Afghanistan.

Earlier this year, a prominent Afghan opposition figure said that the US is seeking to legitimize the Taliban through holding negotiations with the belligerent group.

"... No doubt the Taliban is eager to negotiate with the US since the group sees

the talks a positive step towards its legitimacy," former Afghan Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah told FNA in February.

He said that some foreign countries have taken advantage and get involved in Afghan peace talks after the Afghan government failed to encourage the Taliban to hold talks with the central government within the geographical borders of Afghanistan.

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

- **Afghan president says US must hand over Bagram prison to Kabul**

Press TV

September 9, 2012

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has warned against a delay by Washington to hand over the biggest US-run prison in Afghanistan to Kabul.

In March, Washington and Kabul signed a deal that would give control of the Bagram Detention Center in the northeastern province of Parwan to Afghan forces within six months. However, US media have recently reported that

Washington is unwilling to hand over the facility.

“Under the deal, the Bagram jail is to be handed over to Afghanistan within six months. Any delay in this connection will be regarded a violation of the country’s sovereignty,” Karzai said on Saturday.

He made the remarks during a meeting with the commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), General John Allen, and the US ambassador to Kabul, James Cunningham.

Karzai also stated that the detention facility has to be handed over to Afghans on Monday.

The Afghan president appointed a commission in February to oversee the process of transferring prisoners from the notorious detention center and other jails run by the US-led foreign forces.

So far, Washington has transferred 3,000 inmates to Afghan control, but the US still maintains custody of some 200 prisoners.

In May 2010, the International Committee of the Red Cross confirmed reports of the

existence of the detention facility at Bagram Airbase.

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

- **Taliban Denounces Blacklisting Of Haqqani Network**

By RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan

September 9, 2012

The Taliban has denounced moves by the United States to blacklist the Pakistan-based Haqqani network as a terrorist organization, saying it would have no impact on militant operations.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid also claimed there was "no separate entity in Afghanistan by the name of Haqqani," saying the network's commanders and fighters are all loyal to Taliban supreme leader Mullah Omar.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the designation on September 7.

It takes effect on September 14, imposing sanctions against "material support or resources" for the organization.

U.S. officials have accused the Pakistani state of having ties to the Haqqani network.

Individuals from the group were placed on the U.S. terrorist blacklist earlier.

But Washington had resisted blacklisting the entire group over concerns it would hamper attempted peace talks.

With reporting by AFP

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

- **US-led airstrikes kill 7 in Afghanistan**

Press TV

September 9, 2012

At least seven people have been killed in airstrikes carried out by US-led foreign forces in southern Afghanistan, Press TV reports.

The aerial attacks took place in Kandahar province on Sunday.

Provincial officials confirmed the attacks and the deaths. But the Western military

alliance has not yet commented on the raids.

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>

- **Coordinated Explosions Jolt Afghanistan's Western Province**

Fars News Agency

September 9, 2012

TEHRAN (FNA)- Several coordinated blasts rocked western province of Farah in Afghanistan, Sunday morning, killing and

injuring some Afghan civilians, a local official reported.

According to provincial governor spokesman Abdul Rahman Zhawandai, the blasts took place near the provincial governor compound and left at least one dead and 16 others wounded.

In the meantime, another local official speaking on the condition of anonymity said at least 3 Afghan civilians have been killed following the blast thus far.

The source further added that at least 19 others have been wounded.

No group including the Taliban militants have so far claimed responsibility behind the incident.

Also, yesterday an explosion rocked the Afghan capital killing 5 Afghan children.

The incident took place after a missile fired from unknown location struck in Shash Darak area of capital Kabul.

Shash Darak is located near Wazir Akbar Khan area in capital Kabul which is

considered to be one of the high profile and diplomatic zone in Kabul.

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

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

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