



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Proces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

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Ethnic and Secterian Groups

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1. IRAQ

- **Nijaifi, Deputy of SRSG discuss IHEC, UN roles in upcoming PCs elections (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) –The Speaker, Osama al-Nijaifi, and the Deputy of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq discussed "The roles of the Independent High Electoral Commission and the United Nations in observing the upcoming Provincial Councils elections."

A statement by Nijaifi's office received by AIN cited "The UN expressed satisfaction for the accomplishment of the parliament concerning the IHEC and stressed the importance of nominating the ninth member of the IHEC Commissioners Board."

"Both sides discussed the date of the PC elections that must be conducted to consolidate democracy," the statement added.

"Nijaifi emphasized the neutral role of the UN and the importance of its support till establishing the independent committees as he stressed the significance of following

up the issue of the human rights by UNAMI," the statement continued.

"Nijaifi confirmed the necessity of reaching a comprehensive vision during the meeting of the former members and the new members of the IHEC," the statement concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18850

- **Talabani to meet Maliki in Sulaimaniya next Wednesday (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) –The President, Jalal Talabani, will received, on next Wednesday, the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, at his residence in Sulaimaniya province after his return from the medical treatment.

The Spokesman of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, Azad Jundiyan, stated to AIN "Maliki will head to Sulaimaniya to meet Talabani," noting that "Both sides will discuss the political updates and the pending issues among the blocs in addition to the means of solving the current crisis."

"They will hold talks over the disputed areas including Kirkuk and the formation of Tigris Operations Command," he added.

"Talabani will discuss finding the common ground to hold the national meeting with the leaders of the political blocs," he stressed, assuring that "The current crisis is complicated due to the lack of trust among the various sides."

He ruled out "Setting a date for holding the national meeting because this is linked with the success of the upcoming talks that Talabani will hold with the political blocs next days."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18845

- **Sadrists announce their support to nominate Christian component in the electoral commission (Shafaq News)**

Shafaq News, Sept 18 / The Liberal bloc, affiliated to the Sadrist movement announced on Tuesday, its desire that the ninth candidate in the electoral commission would be from the Christian component, not Turkmen and it has

pointed out that Turkmen have their space in the National Alliance and al-Iraqiya list and pointed out to the possibility that a general manager or a deputy would be representative of the components.

The head of the Liberal bloc in the parliament, Bahaa al-Araji said in a news conference, attended by "Shafaq News", that "the Turkmen have representatives in the Iraqi National Alliance and al-Iraqiya list and these two blocs are represented in the commission".

He added, "It is not necessarily that each component would have a representative in the Commission, but they could have a general manager or a deputy".

The Iraqi parliament had voted on Monday on eight of the nine candidates for membership of the Electoral Commission in Iraq.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3575-sadrists-announce-their-support-to-nominate-christian-component-in-the-electoral-commission.html>

- **Christians want a seat in electoral commission's board (AKnews)**

ERBIL, Sept. 18 (AKnews) – Christians of Iraq want to have a seat in the Iraqi electoral commission's newly elected Commissioners Board, a Christian MP said.

The electoral commission doesn't represent all parties therefore its seats should be increased to ensure the representation of all groups in the commission Yonadem Kanna said Tuesday.

"We regret to say that the Presidency of the Council of Representatives violated the law of the Electoral Commission, by leaving only one seat for minorities, while the women, Turkmen and Christians were not represented."

" We do not want to demand of the ninth seat at the expense of the minorities, women or Turkmen," Kanna said, therefore the number of the boards nine seats should be increased.

"Women should at least have two seats in the Commission, and we demand our right and also support the right of Turkmen in this issue as well" Kanna said emphasizing

on allocation of seats for Christians and Turkmen as well.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/326831/>

- **Christian MP demands increasing number of seats in electoral commission (AKnews)**

ERBIL, Sept. 18 (AKnews) - The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) doesn't represent all parties and peoples of Iraq, so the number of its seats should be increased to ensure fair representation of all Iraqis, a Christian MP stated Tuesday.

Yonadam Yousef Kanna said "we regret to say that the Presidency of the Council of Representatives violated the law of the Electoral Commission, by leaving only one seat for minorities, while the women, Turkmen and Christians were not represented [in the new commission].

"The law of the Federal Court stresses the need to represent all parties in the electoral commission, but the presidency of the Council of Representatives violated this law.

"We [Christians] do not demand the ninth seat at the expense of the minorities, women or Turkmen, but the women should at least have two seats in the commission, and we demand also our right and support the right of Turkmen in this issue."

The MP suggested as solution to "amend the electoral law, and increase the seats of the Commission, to represent all parties and allow them to have an active role in the society."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/326822/>

- **Turkmen insist on wining 9th seat of IHEC Commissioners' Board (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) -MP Hasan al-Bayati of the Turkmen Front stressed that "The Turkmen insist on nominating the ninth commissioner of the Independent High Electoral Commission from the Turkmen community."

Bayati added that "The Turkmen community is the only constituent that nominated a female candidate to be a

representative for the Turkmen and women in the IHEC."

He stated to AIN "All the Parliamentary Committees held meetings with the Women Committee where they assured that they uphold nominating a woman for the Commissioners Board yet they did not nominate a female element, thus the Turkmen group is the only side that nominated a woman for this post."

"The Turkmen female nominee enjoys the required features and she worked as a Director General in the IHEC for five years," he assured.

The Turkmen MP added that "The ninth name of the IHEC Commissioners' Board is the Turkmen's merit as being the third community of the Iraqi society as approved by the Parliament earlier."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18812

- **Kinani: INA Monday meeting discussed three issues (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) –MP, Ameer al-Kinani, of Ahrar bloc within the Iraqi

National Alliance confirmed that "The meeting of the INA that was held on last Monday night discussed three issues which are the important laws, the meetings of the government with the US delegations in addition to the issue of the balance in the institutions of the State."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), he said "The meeting tackled the Infrastructure Law, the government meetings with the US military leaders in addition to discussing the issue of the balance in the institutions of the State with the head of the Balance Committee, Hussien al-Shihristani, who clarified the results accomplished by the Committee."

"The INA was in need to know the nature of the meetings concluded by the government with the US delegation due to the concerns over using the Iraqi territories to launch military attack against Syrian or Iran," he added.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18852

- **MP denies political deal between Ahrar bloc, SLC to endorse General Amnesty Law (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) –MP, Ameer al-Kinani, of Ahrar bloc denied "Concluding a political deal between the Ahrar bloc and the State of Law Coalition to endorse the General Amnesty Law."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), he said "Ahrar bloc rejects concluding deals with any political sides to endorse this law."

"This law was in need of revision concerning the concept of terrorism and the forgery but now we overcame these two points," he mentioned.

He expected "Endorsing this law during the upcoming weeks."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18853

- **Iraq reopens border to Syria refugees, excludes young men (Reuters)**

By Suadad al-Salhy

BAGHDAD, Sept 18 (Reuters) - Iraq reopened its border with Syria on Tuesday to receive refugees escaping violence, but refused entry to young men for security reasons, Iraqi officials said.

"They (the central government) fear that some of those young men could be members of al Qaeda or the Free Syrian Army," a local government official in Iraq's Anbar province said.

Al Qaim was closed at the end of August when Syrian forces backed by jets fought rebels for control of an airfield and military base near the Syrian border town of Albu Kamal, within metres of the crossing and on a major supply route from Iraq.

"The prime minister gave orders to receive 100 refugees daily and the priority is for women, children, elderly, wounded and sick people, but excluded young men," al Qaim's mayor Farhan Ftaikhan told Reuters by phone.

Ftaikhan said Iraqi authorities had set up refugee camp facilities with a capacity for five hundred families.

Al Qaim is already suffering spillover from the fighting in Syria and Syrian jets fly over Iraqi airspace almost daily to make bombing runs on rebel positions just inside Iraq.

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/iraq-reopens-border-to-syria-refugees-excludes-young-men/>

- **Abbawi, Fijian Defense Minister discuss bilateral relations (alliraqnews)**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) – The Iraqi Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for policy planning and bilateral relations Mr. Labeed Abbawi met the Fijian Defense Minister Mr. Cokanasaj Djokitani, the representative of the State of Fiji to the United Nations, Mr. Peter Thomas and the delegation accompanying them.

A statement by the Foreign Ministry received by AIN cited "Abbawi received the Fijian delegation at his office in Baghdd where they discussed the bilateral relations and the issue of opening diplomatic representation between Iraq and Fiji to contribute to the development of relations of cooperation between them."

"The two sides also discussed the issue of facilitating the process of granting visas to Iraqi territory for Fijian workers in UNAMI Organization of the United Nations," the statement added.

The statement pointed out "For his part, the guest minister presented during the meeting his thanks and gratitude for the hospitality and the open-minded attitude he realized in Iraq where he hoped to repeat the visit between officials of the two countries."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18815

- **Leading al-Qaeda figure in Salaheddine killed (Al-Shorfa)**

By Mohammad al-Qaisi in Salaheddine, Sept 18

An Iraqi army force killed a gunman described as a leading al-Qaeda figure in a security operation south of Tikrit last Thursday, (September 14th), Iraqi police in Salaheddine province announced.

The army force also arrested five other gunmen during the security operation.

Police spokesperson Hasan al-Majmaie told Mawtani, "A special army unit, assisted by police, raided a military industrial complex used by the former Iraqi army in the Tigris waterway area, where a number of al-Qaeda elements had gathered."

"After gunfire exchange for about an hour and a half, the Iraqi security forces called in a military helicopter for air support, bombing the site and killing a leading al-Qaeda member named Hashem Matar," al-Majmaie added.

"Five others were wounded and later arrested and taken to a special hospital under tight security," he said.

"The security forces found a large warehouse of weapons and explosives belonging to al-Qaeda and containing dozens of explosive charges of various sizes, ammunition for medium and light weapons, and rockets, which had been partly triggered off by the bombing," al-Majmaie said.

Brig. Gen. Raheem Hasan, commander of the Iraqi army eighth brigade, told Mawtani, "The operation required the participation of about 100 army soldiers and more than 50 policemen, in addition to a military helicopter because of the danger posed by the gunmen.

http://mawtani.al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/iii/features/2012/09/18/feature-02

- **Shell says may miss 2012 Majnoon output target (Reuters)**

DUBAI, Sept 18 (Reuters) - Royal Dutch Shell's Majnoon oilfield in Iraq, hampered by pipeline construction delays, may miss a 2012 target of 175,000 barrels per day.

"It would be fair to say the progress has been slower than we originally hoped," Mark Carne, executive vice president for Middle East and North Africa at Shell Upstream International, said on Tuesday.

"But I am very pleased with how the project is developing."

Asked if the 2012 target of 175,000 barrels per day could slide into next year, Carne said: "It is certainly plausible".

Wary of losses, Shell has asked Iraq for a waiver to start recovering costs if Majnoon, which shut for maintenance on June 26, does not meet its first commercial production target by year-end - a contract requirement before costs can be retrieved, according to documents seen by Reuters.

The 12.6 billion barrel Majnoon oilfield is one of the major fields alongside Rumaila, West Qurna Phase One and Zubair that Iraq is developing with foreign companies in the south as it recovers from years of war and sanctions.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/18/shell-majnoon-idINL5E8KI79620120918>

- **Kurdistan sees oil exports jumping in 2013 (Reuters)**

LONDON, Sept 18 (Reuters) - Iraqi Kurdish oil exports could rise by more than 50 percent next year after the autonomous region reached a deal with central government to put an end to a payments dispute, Kurdistan's energy minister said on Tuesday.

Ashti Hawrami also said last week's deal was a big breakthrough that could pave the way towards resolution of Iraq's long stalled oil and gas law by the end of 2012 or early 2013 in a move to help unlock huge reserves potential.

"If we are sincere, I think this can be done," he said. "We need stability within to have stability of supply."

He said Kurdistan could ramp up oil exports to 250,000 barrels per day or even more next year from the current 140,000 bpd. Iraq's overall oil output has risen to above 3 million bpd and overtaken Iran in recent month, making it OPEC's second largest producer.

In April, Kurdistan halted exports of its oil in protest over what it said were payments due from Baghdad to companies.

It restarted in August and last week said it would keep its oil production for export at 140,000 barrels per day this month before raising it to 200,000 bpd for the rest of this year.

"We will do our best to do more in the 2013 budget - 250,000 bpd or more might be the case," he said.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFL5E8KINOY20120918>

- **Shell: Majnoon field production will reach 175 thousand barrels (Shafaq News)**

Shafaq News, Sept 18 / Shell Oil Company operating in Majnoon field in Maysan province revealed on Tuesday that the production of the field will not reach 175 thousand barrels per day in 2012 for the non-completion of the oil pipeline transferring oil to the Iraqi ports.

The Executive Vice President for the Middle East and North Africa in Shell Marc Karen Company said in a press statement briefed by "Shafaq News" that "Majnoon Iraqi field may not reach the aimed level of production at 175 thousand barrels per day in 2012 as a result of the delay of completing the pipeline carrier to ports.

Karen added that "It's fair to say that progress is slower than we had hoped, But I am extremely satisfied with how the project progress"

If the level of the targeted production for the current year delayed to 2013 he replied "it's possible, certainly."

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/news/3574-shell-majnoon-field-production-will-reach-175-thousand-barrels-.html>

- **MP describes investment in Iraq as "idle"**

Baghdad, Sept 18 (AIN) -The Parliamentary Services and Construction Committee described the investment in Iraq as "idle and cannot be refreshed at the current time."

The Committee assured that "The sides that wish to invest in Iraq face difficulty in dealing with the bureaucracy existing in the governmental institutions in addition to the complexity of authorities among those institutions."

The Head of the Committee, Vian Dakhil stated to AIN on Tuesday "We support the investment sector but we have notes on its law and applications."

MP Dakhil of the Kurdistan Alliance continued saying "The sides that wish to

invest in Iraq face difficulty in work under the current circumstances represented by the high bureaucracy in the State's departments and the overlap in the powers of the governmental institutions that prompt the investors to refrain from investing in Iraq."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18800

- **State of Law says 9th member to be elected next week**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: A lawmaker from the State of Law bloc said on Monday that the parliament voted on four members of the National Alliance, two from the Kurdistan Alliance and two more from the al-Iraqiya bloc as members of the Commission Board of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), expecting that the ninth member will be selected next week.

"After talks lasted for eight months in the experts months, eight members out of nine have been chosen out in the Commission Board of the IHEC," Shaker al-Daraji told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

"The parliament will agree on the mechanism to name the ninth member during the next week session," he continued.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28xmm%20euz2c2nrojo451b0gdlzu%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150534&l=1

- **Sadrists announce their support to nominate Christian component in the electoral commission**

Shafaq News / The Liberal bloc, affiliated to the Sadrist movement announced on Tuesday, its desire that the ninth candidate in the electoral commission would be from the Christian component, not Turkmen and it has pointed out that Turkmen have their space in the National Alliance and al-Iraqiya list and pointed out to the possibility that a general manager or a deputy would be representative of the components.

The head of the Liberal bloc in the parliament, Bahaa al-Araji said in a news conference, attended by "Shafaq News", that "the Turkmen have representatives in the Iraqi National Alliance and al-Iraqiya list and these two blocs are represented in the commission".

He added, "It is not necessarily that each component would have a representative in the Commission, but they could have a general manager or a deputy".

The Iraqi parliament had voted on Monday on eight of the nine candidates for membership of the Electoral Commission in Iraq.

A parliamentary source told "Shafaq News", that "the parliament has voted on eight candidates for membership of the Electoral Commission, while the ninth candidate remained controversial among the parliamentary blocs."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3575-sadrists-announce-their-support-to-nominate-christian-component-in-the-electoral-commission.html>

2. IRAN

- **Iran: Israel Main Obstacle to Nuclear-Free-Middle East**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast urged the nuclear countries to be committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and

said that the Zionist regime is the main obstacle to a nuclear free Middle East.

Mehman-Parast said the unlawful Zionist regime of Israel is the main obstacle to creating a nuclear-free Middle East, adding that the issue was a main topic of discussions during the 16th heads-of-state summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Tehran (August 30-31).



He expressed hope that countries with influence in the issue of nuclear activities would act according to the NPT, fulfill their duty for doing justice to countries who want to use nuclear energy for their progress, and keep an eye on the main danger which is the existence of nuclear weapons and the countries that are not committed to the NPT.

Mehman-Parast noted that Iran's nuclear facilities have been the most-inspected facilities by the IAEA, but none of the claims made about Iran's pursuing non-

civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program has been confirmed.

Israel and its close ally the United States accuse Iran of seeking a nuclear weapon, while they have never presented any corroborative document to substantiate their allegations. Both Washington and Tel Aviv possess advanced weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear warheads.

Iran vehemently denies the charges, insisting that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only. Tehran stresses that the country has always pursued a civilian path to provide power to the growing number of Iranian population, whose fossil fuel would eventually run dry.

Iran, an NPT-signatory, has also called for the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from across the globe.

In pursuit of global nuclear disarmament, Tehran held a conference on nuclear disarmament on April 18-19, 2010 with officials from different world countries in attendance. During the two-day conference, world officials and politicians put their heads together to address issues

and concerns in connection with nuclear disarmament.

Despite Iran's compliance with the NPT, Washington and its Western allies accuse the country of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, while they have never presented any corroborative evidence to substantiate their allegations. Iran denies the charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Political observers believe that the United States has remained at loggerheads with Iran mainly over the independent and home-grown nature of Tehran's nuclear technology, which gives the Islamic Republic the potential to turn into a world power and a role model for the other third-world countries. Washington has laid much pressure on Iran to make it give up the most sensitive and advanced part of the technology, which is uranium enrichment, a process used for producing nuclear fuel for power plant.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106241000>

- **Mursi Stresses Importance of Iran, Egypt's Unity in Facing Global Challenges**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Egyptian President Mohammad Mursi said Iran plays an important role in resolving the regional crises, and underlined that Tehran and Cairo should be united in dealing with global challenges.



"When the follower of unrighteousness are united in their unrighteous path, why should not we go united in our right position when dealing with global challenges," Mursi said in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi in Cairo on Tuesday.

Stressing that Egypt assumes Iran's stability as its own stability, he said, "There is no problem between Iran and Egypt."

The Egyptian president also underscored the important role of Iran's assistance to the settlement of problems in the region, and announced Cairo's readiness for any kind of regional cooperation with Tehran.

After the collapse of Hosni Mubarak's regime, the Iranian and Egyptian officials voiced their interest in the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries and Salehi officially invited the then Egyptian counterpart Nabil Al-Arabi to pay a visit to Tehran.

Later, the Iranian foreign minister and his former Egyptian counterpart also held a meeting in Bali, Indonesia.

Also, during the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran late August, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Egyptian counterpart conferred on ways to promote the bilateral relations between Tehran and Cairo, and stressed the need for continued consultations in this regard.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106240994>

● **Iran's Top Negotiator Meets Ashton in Istanbul**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's top negotiator Saeed Jalili held a meeting with EU Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton, who represents the world powers in negotiations with Tehran, in Istanbul Monday night.

Jalili and Ashton met on Tuesday in a follow-up to their previous negotiations on Iran's nuclear issue.

"While it was not a formal negotiating round, it was a useful and constructive meeting," Ashton's Spokesman Michael Mann said.

Ashton will meet with the foreign ministers of the Group5+1 - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany - on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York next week "in order to assess the situation and to discuss the way forward", her office said after the Tuesday talks.

Earlier reports said that Jalili and Ashton were due to exchange views over the latest stances expressed by the two sides' experts in their July 3 meeting in Istanbul.

After a 15-month hiatus, Iran and the Group 5+1 held several rounds of talks this year, with the latest one in Moscow on June 18-19.

At the end of the Moscow talks, Jalili and Ashton announced that they would hold a meeting after talks between their deputies and also a meeting between the two sides' experts.

In early July, Iran and the six world powers ended two days of talks by technical experts who discussed the details of the two sides' proposals to end the nuclear standoff between Tehran and the sextet.

Later in July, the deputy lead negotiators of Iran and the six world powers, Ali Baqeri and Helga Schmidt, met in Istanbul to exchange views over the results of the experts' talks.

Also, Jalili and Ashton had a phone conversation on August 2, during which the former reminded the constructive and initiative stances presented by Tehran in Istanbul, and urged Group 5+1 to provide a clear response in this regard.

In response, Ashton hailed Iran's practicable proposals, and pledged to discuss Iran's viewpoints with the representatives of the world powers to prepare a justifiable response.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106240992>

- **Iran's Navy Launches Radar-Evading Missile Destroyer**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran on Tuesday launched a home-made missile destroyer at the order of the Commander in Chief, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

The Islamic Republic of Iran Sahand (IRI Sahand) missile destroyer was officially launched by the Iranian Navy in Iran's Southern port city of Bandar Abbas minutes ago.

Also today, the Iranian navy launched a heavy submarine, named Tareq, after the subsurface vessel was overhauled by the country's experts.

In June 2012, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said the country plans to build new vessels and

submarines in a bid to further boost its naval capabilities.

"New surface and subsurface vessels will join the Islamic Republic of Iran's Navy fleet in the near future," Sayyari told FNA at the time, adding that the Navy is due to build new vessels.

Speaking to FNA in June, Lieutenant Commander of the Navy for Technical Affairs Rear Admiral Abbas Zamini reminded that the designing and building of Jamaran destroyer, a Mowdge 1 Class vessel, showed Iran's high technical know-how and capabilities in manufacturing battleships, and added that the country is already manufacturing a second generation of the hi-tech vessel.

The construction phase of Velayat destroyer, a Mowdge 2 Class vessel, is 70% through, he said, and added that the vessel is under construction in Iran's Northern port city of Bandar Anzali.

The admiral declared that Velayat will be launched this Iranian year (ends on March 2013).

"In addition" the commander stated "construction of other Mowdge and Sina-class destroyers are underway including Mowdge 3 and 4 projects."

He further announced that construction of a Mowdge 5 class destroyer, named Sahand, will end in the near future, and the Navy vessel will be launched this year.

The Admiral noted the manufacture of Sina-class missile-launching frigates, and said that construction of three classes of this Navy vessel is on Iran's agenda.

He also mentioned that the Iranian defense ministry and the Navy are working on four projects to build four different classes of warships, and said the four projects are called Sina 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Iran's first home-made destroyer, Jamaran, was launched in late February 2010. The Mowdge Class vessel has a displacement of around 14,000 tons and is equipped with modern radars and electronic warfare capabilities and is armed with a variety of anti-ship, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles.

Jamaran is also equipped with different kinds of weapons, including a powerful and smart missile named 'Nour' (light).

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106240848>

- **No problem between Iran and Egypt: Morsi**

TEHRAN, Sept. 19 (MNA) – Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi in his meeting with the Iranian foreign minister in Cairo on Tuesday said that Iran and Egypt have a long history of civilization and they “like each other” and “there is no problem between the two countries”.

Ali Akbar Salehi while conveyed President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s warm greetings to Morsi, expressed his gratitude for the participation of Egypt in the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran in late August.

Salehi, who had visited Cairo to participate in regional meeting on Syria, congratulated the people of Egypt and Morsi on their victorious revolution which brought down the government of Hosni Mubarak.

Salehi added that Islamic Republic of Iran respects the will of Egyptians to determine their own destiny.

The foreign minister said Iran’s strategy with regard to its neighbors and regional nations is based on mutual respect, peace, cooperation, and promotion of stability and security.

Some other important issues discussed in the meeting were regional developments especially the crisis in Syria.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1699940>

- **Iran’s nuclear chief asks IAEA to inform Iran about Israel’s nuclear sites**

TEHRAN, Sept. 18 (MNA) – Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization chief says he has asked the International Atomic Energy Agency to provide Iran with information about Israel’s nuclear installations, the Tehran Times reported.

“During today’s meeting, I told Amano to allow (Iran) to defend its achievements on an equal footing (with Israel) in view of the situation in the region and the danger

that exists for Iran,” Fereydoun Abbasi told reporters after a meeting with IAEA director Yukiya Amano in Vienna on Monday.

Abbasi was in Vienna to attend the IAEA's 155-nation general conference.

“I advised the director general to also provide us with (information about) geographical coordinates and the number of nuclear facilities of the Zionist regime, which is an enemy of Iran, so that the two sides would be on an equal footing to (take action).”

On Monday, Abbasi said "terrorists and saboteurs" might have infiltrated the IAEA in an effort to derail Iran's nuclear program.

"Terrorists and saboteurs might have intruded the agency and might be making decisions covertly," Abbasi told the general conference.

For example, Abbasi said, explosives had been used to cut power lines from the city of Qom to the Fordo uranium enrichment facility on August 17. He said IAEA

inspectors arrived to inspect it shortly after power lines were blown up.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1699576>

- **Iran's Salehi to visit Syria on Wednesday**

TEHRAN, Sept. 18 (MNA) – Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi will visit Damascus for talks with Syrian officials, an informed source told the Mehr News Agency.

Salehi visited Cairo on Monday to participate in a foreign ministerial meeting of a contact group on Syria comprising of Egypt, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

“Ali Akbar Salehi....will visit Damascus tomorrow on his return to Iran,” he said.

Salehi will hold talks with President Beshar al-Assad and Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem.

In the meeting on Monday Salehi proposed that the four countries of Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia to send observers to Syria to monitor a ceasefire

between government troops and rebel groups.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1699510>

- **Iran always ready to cooperate with IAEA: Mehmanparast**



Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast says Iran has always been ready to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Mehmanparast noted on Tuesday that Iran's nuclear facilities have been the most-inspected facilities by the IAEA, but none of the claims made about Iran's pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program has been confirmed.

He expressed hope that countries with influence in the issue of nuclear activities

would act according to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), fulfill their duty for doing justice to countries who want to use nuclear energy for their progress, and keep an eye on the main danger which is the existence of nuclear weapons and countries that are not committed to the NPT.

Mehmanparast also referred to the successful holding of the 16th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran and expressed hope that the movement could help to resolve different international crises that are caused by greed of a few countries.

He noted that the unlawful Zionist regime of Israel is the main obstacle to creating a nuclear-free Middle East which was one of the main issues discussed during the NAM summit in Tehran.

The United States, Israel and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran argues that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of IAEA, it is entitled to develop

and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The IAEA has conducted numerous inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities, but has never found any evidence indicating diversion in Tehran's nuclear energy program toward military purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/18/262301/iran-ready-to-cooperate-with-iaea/>

- **Iran supports diplomatic solution for Syria crisis: Mehmanparast**

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi (R), Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr (C) and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (L) attend a press conference after their first high-level meeting on the Syria crisis on September 17, 2012.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi (R), Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr (C) and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu (L) attend a press conference after their first high-level meeting on the Syria crisis on September

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast says the Islamic Republic

supports a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.

“We welcome any plan that can offer diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Syrian issue, meet the demands of the [Syrian] people, make it possible for the [Syrian] government to implement reforms, and prevent foreign intervention,” he said on Tuesday.

Mehmanparast added that Iran places strong emphasis on a diplomatic solution for the Syrian crisis that would put an end to violence, foreign intervention and arming of the unknown and irresponsible groups in the country.

The Iranian diplomat further stated that several important issues with regard to the situation in Syria have been discussed at the high-level meeting of the quartet group on Syria in the Egyptian capital, Cairo.

During an emergency meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Mecca in mid-August, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi put forward a proposal for the establishment of a quartet group,

comprising Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, to help resolve the Syrian crisis.

The meeting of the quartet group on Syria was held on Monday about a week after preparatory talks in the Egyptian capital by lower-ranking officials from the four countries' foreign ministries.

"Controlling the Syrian borders with its neighbors, attention on the [Syrian] people's demands in a peaceful atmosphere, and holding national talks between the representatives of the [Syrian] government and the opposition were discussed and highlighted at the meeting," Mehmanparast said.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011. Damascus says outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorists are the driving factor behind the unrest and deadly violence while the opposition accuses the security forces of being behind the killings.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/18/262293/iran-backs-diplomatic-solution-in-syria/>

- **World powers to discuss Iran nuclear program at U.N. next week**

(Reuters) - Foreign ministers and the chief negotiator for world powers will meet next week to try to figure out how to break an impasse in negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, after talks on Tuesday yielded no sign of progress.

Six world powers, represented by European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, have sought to persuade Iran to scale back its nuclear program through intensifying economic sanctions and diplomacy.

The powers fear Iran is developing a bomb, but Tehran says its program serves peaceful purposes only.

In the latest talks, Ashton and Iran's chief negotiator Saeed Jalili held a meeting in Istanbul that was described as "useful and constructive".

It was "an important opportunity to stress once again to Iran the urgent need to make progress," according to Ashton's spokesman.

Though three rounds of talks since April have made little progress, neither side wants to break off negotiations because of concerns that this could lead to a new war.

Israel, believed to be the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East, sees a possible Iranian nuclear bomb as a threat to its existence and has said it may resort to military means if diplomacy and sanctions fail.

Any deals are likely to be struck only during political talks between Iran and the six powers - the United States, Russia and China, plus three EU nations: France, Germany and Britain.

Ashton "is planning to meet the Foreign Ministers of the EU 3 + 3 in the margins of the UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) ministerial week in New York in order to assess the situation and to discuss the way forward," her spokesman said in a statement.

Ashton is to leave for New York on Sunday and will likely stay until the following Friday, her spokesman said.

Pressure on Iran has been rising in recent weeks.

A meeting of EU foreign ministers in Cyprus earlier this month produced support from France, Britain and Germany for further sanctions on Iran. The EU has already banned oil imports from Iran and isolated its banking sector, while the United States ratcheted up sanctions over the summer to punish banks, insurers and shippers that help Tehran sell oil.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said last week that EU members were drawing up the new sanctions with a view to discussing them in mid-October.

The International Atomic Energy Agency censured Iran last Thursday for defying international demands to curb uranium enrichment and failing to address mounting disquiet about its suspected research into atomic bombs.

At the core of the discussions are Iranian efforts to enrich uranium to 20 percent fissile purity, an advance that would bring it close to acquiring weapons-grade material.

World powers demanded during this year's talks that Tehran abandon such production, ship stockpiles out of the country and close an underground facility where high-grade enrichment takes place. Tehran has refused to meet the demands unless economic sanctions are lifted.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/09/18/us-iran-nuclear-eu-idUSBRE88H1G720120918>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **World Bank: Palestinian economic crisis is deepening**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- The World Bank warned of a deepening fiscal crisis in the Palestinian economy in its latest report on Wednesday, urging donors to act immediately.

The twice yearly document, prepared to inform a PA donor meeting in late September, stresses that sustainable growth can only be driven by strong private sector investment and access to Area C is vital to enabling private sector growth.

"Donors do need to act urgently in the face of a serious fiscal crisis facing the PA in the short term," said Mariam Sherman, World Bank Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza.

"But even with this financial support, sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without a removal of the barriers preventing private sector development, particularly in Area C."

The report notes that Area C, the 60 percent of the West Bank under full Israeli control, holds most of the natural resources, agricultural land, and land reserves in the West Bank.

Access to these resources could play a significant role in providing an economic foundation in the development of industries such as construction, telecommunications, agriculture and tourism, the report says.



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"The most important message of this report is that economic cohesion is not achievable when the areas in which people have to operate and go about their business are crisscrossed by impediments," Sherman said.

Movement into and out of the West Bank continues to be "severely constrained by a multi-layered system of physical, institutional, and administrative restrictions that have fragmented the territory into small enclaves lacking most forms of economic cohesion," it adds.

The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, a forum of donors to the PA, is due to meet in New York on September 23.

The PA Minister of Finance, Nabil Qassis, and the Minister of State for Planning Affairs, Muhammad Abu Ramadan, will both attend the meeting and submit a

report discussing the unsustainable nature of the current status quo in the West Bank.

"We all know that the only viable solution to the conflict is bringing an end to Israel's almost half century-long occupation," the ministers said Tuesday.

"We can act decisively now to preserve the possibility of a two-state solution, or we can watch the situation evolve into full-blown apartheid."

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=521462>

- **PA minister urges EU to intervene in hunger strike cases**

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- The Palestinian Authority Minister of Prisoners Affairs on Wednesday urged the European Union to intervene in the cases of four hunger-striking Palestinian prisoners being held by Israel.



Issa Qaraqe made the comments during a meeting in Ramallah with John Gatt Rutter, a representative of the European Union.

"Israel should respect the lives of Palestinian prisoners and respect their human dignity," Qaraqe quoted Rutter as saying. Rutter is in touch with Israeli authorities about suitable solutions to the situation, he added.

Samer al-Barq is on his 121st day of renewed hunger strike, Hassan Safadi has been on renewed hunger strike for 91 days and Ayman Sharawna has refused food for 81 days.

Another detainee, Samer al-Issawi, also launched a hunger strike on Aug. 1, but prisoners groups were unable to visit him to check his current condition.

Al-Barq was hospitalized on Monday after passing out at Ramla prison clinic, Jawad Boulos of the Palestinian prisoners society told Ma'an.

The International Committee of the Red Cross warned on Friday that the hunger strikers were in a critical condition, and urged a prompt solution.

The same day, European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton called on Israel to "do all it can to preserve the health" of the detainees.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=521441>

- **Shaath says PA rethinking Oslo**

Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin signed the accords in 1993.

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- The Palestinian leadership is determined to submit a bid to the UN seeking to obtain recognition of Palestine as non-member state regardless of obstacles and threats, a senior Fatah leader said Tuesday.

Speaking from Saudi Arabia, Fatah central committee member Nabil Shaath said local elections would take place on time. He added that procedures to alleviate economic hardships would continue, and the president's efforts with the UN bid would receive the needed support.

Asked if it is possible that the PA will disavow the Oslo Accord, Shaath said, "This issue has been discussed elaborately, and the subject of discussion now is the PA as a whole rather than looking for alternatives to replace Oslo. If we decide to start over and go for new negotiations, Israel will put forward more unachievable conditions than before."

He continued: "Israel has already disavowed agreements which they did not comply with. Making an amendment here and another there would not help. The problem is not with one term or another, but rather with the method we adopt and the possibility to reconsider our struggle. That will need more than one session and the world must realize that we are reconsidering the whole issue."

Shaath added that "We do not fear threats, neither do we worry when Israel

rejects all suggestions. When we stopped efforts at an international level, we received threats, and I am sure we will obtain a non-member status in the UN."



The Fatah leader is visiting Saudi Arabia along with Fatah officials Jibreel Rajoub, Muhammad Ishtayya and Amin Maqboul. The visit is part of efforts to recruit support for the UN bid.

Asked if the PA is in Saudi Arabia looking for an alternative to Egypt because of its recent tendency to cooperate more with Hamas at the expense of the PA, Shaath said both the Saudis and the Egyptians were brothers. "

"One can't prefer one brother to another. There is no problem with visiting different Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia who plays a strategic role in all regional issues," he said.

Shaath highlighted that the PA did not oppose Egyptian leaders meeting with delegations from Hamas or other factions, but not as a legitimate government or representative. He asserted that both Egypt and Qatar need to give the PA an explanation about treating Hamas' delegations as official representatives.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=521402>

- **Abbas says he will go ahead with UN bid speech**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- President Abbas reiterated on Wednesday that he will deliver a speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations to ask for recognition of Palestine as a non-member state.

The comments, which were posted on the president's Facebook page, added that the speech would most likely take place on September 27.



"As in every year I will be tell the whole world about the suffering of my people under the Israeli occupation and its settlements, settler attacks and violations on a daily basis which contradict the United Nations and international law," the comments said.

"We are determined despite all pressure and I am confident that you will all support my request."

Abbas also announced that he will make a 10-day visit to Turkey in the coming week, noting that the country has always supported the Palestinian cause.

The United States opposed Abbas' 2011 bid for UN membership, which got stuck at the Security Council, where the US has veto power.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=521439>

- **Israel to Seize Land near Bethlehem**

BETHELEHEM, September 19, 2012 (Wafa) – The Israeli authorities Wednesday informed two Palestinian farmers from Wadi Fukin, a village west of the southern West Bank city of Bethlehem, of its intention to take over about 60 dunums of their land, according to a local activist.

Head of Wadi Fukin village council, Ahmed sokar, told Wafa that the two Palestinians found notices on their land informing them of their decision to seize their agricultural land.

The notices, he said, gave the farmers 45 days to file a petition against the order at Israeli courts.

He said Israeli authorities have seized around 200 dunums of the village's land since the beginning of 2012.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20700>

- **IDF launches surprise live-fire drill in Golan**

The IDF launched a surprise drill early Wednesday morning on the Golan Heights.

Units were scrambled to the North without warning following an order was given by IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz.

The exercise is aimed at testing the fitness and readiness of several IDF units, with the Artillery Corps taking up center stage.

The Air Force has joined units from the IDF's Northern and Central Commands to take part in the drill. Other military forces, including reserves, are also taking part.

The exercise will end with a live fire exercise on Wednesday afternoon.

"This drill is part of a routine program of checks and surprise exercises held throughout the year by the IDF Comptroller. It is being held under the command of Brig.-Gen. Roei Riptin, who is the chief artillery officer," the IDF Spokesman's Unit said.

Sources in the IDF said the drill was planned ahead of time, and that it should not be seen as a sign of a change in the level of alert.

It comes on the heels of a major Golani Brigade infantry and Armored Corps drill, which was jointly held in the Golan Heights over recent weeks.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=285490>

- **World Bank: PA needs \$400 million lifeline for 2012**

Development of Area C is necessary for sustainable Palestinian economic growth, the World Bank said in a report it published Wednesday calling for donor countries to pledge \$400 million to fix a shortfall in the PA's 2012 budget when the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee meets in New York on September 23.

"Donors do need to act urgently in the face of a serious fiscal crisis facing the PA in the short term," World Bank Country Director for the West Bank and Gaza Mariam Sherman said.

"But even with this financial support, sustainable economic growth cannot be achieved without a removal of the barriers preventing private sector development, particularly in Area C," she said.

According to the report, the Palestinian Authority is projected to have a \$1.5 billion deficit by the end of 2012, for which only \$1.1 b. has been raised from donor countries.

The nations who gather Sunday for the New York donor conference will be asked to make up the additional \$400 m. sum, the report said.

If the money is not found, the PA will face a severe budget crisis, the report warned.

"The PA's local debt is almost at the limit that the banking sector can sustain and therefore it is unlikely that the banks will be providing additional financing," the report said.

"It is also doubtful that private suppliers will be providing further credit given the current high level of arrears," the report said.

“If no additional donor funding is identified, the PA may be forced to finance the gap though accumulating additional arrears to the pension system and cutting some of its basic spending such as wages, which could have severe social impact,” the report warned.

It explained that the PA’s recurrent deficit for the first half of 2012 was 32 percent beyond what had been anticipated.

Total expenditures and net lending were 4.5% above budget while revenues were 7% below their target, the report said.

It warned that Palestinian budget woes would continue unless it could increase private sector investment through the development of Palestinian holdings in Area C in the West Bank, which is under Israeli military control.

The document noted that Israel had taken some steps to help Palestinian development of Area C.

The World Bank report said that, according to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, 119 Palestinian infrastructure projects for Area C were approved in 2011.

It added that according to the ministry, eight master plans for the development of Area C were being examined.

Separately, the report also said that Israel and the PA had reached an understanding to expand trade between them and streamline clearance revenue procedures, starting in 2013.

Still, the report said that restrictions on Palestinian movement and access remained a major impediment to Palestinian economic growth. It also called on Israel to remove obstacles to the Palestinian development of Area C.

Overall, it said, “the continued geographical fragmentation of Area C poses a binding constraint to real economic growth, essential to support the future Palestinian state.”

Israel: PA monetary problems connected to world economic crisis

Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor had not yet seen the report, but had heard that it chastised Israel for not doing

enough to protect Palestinian freedom of movement or development in Area C.

He noted that the world economic situation was deteriorating, and it was important to see the Palestinian's monetary situation within the larger global context.

"It is normal for the Palestinian economy to be weak because it is not disconnected from the global economy. Maybe before asking Israel to do more they [the World Bank] should take stock of the deteriorating economic situation in Israel and Europe and the rest of the world," he said.

He noted that Arab countries such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia could also save the day by "writing checks" to the PA, and not just issuing "empty statements." Palmor said that Israel has lifted road-blocks, checkpoints and issued additional permits for Palestinians to work in Israel.

Earlier this month Israel gave the PA an advance transfer of NIS 250 m. in tax funds.

An Israeli official added that a final status agreement would vastly improve the Palestinian economy and pave the way for increased private investment in the Palestinian territories. The official called on the PA to return to the negotiating table to conclude such an agreement with Israel.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=285480>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Mursi warns Iran its support for Assad hampering relations with Egypt**

The survivor of a strike by Syrian regime forces arrives at a hospital in the Sheikh Fares district of Aleppo.

The survivor of a strike by Syrian regime forces arrives at a hospital in the Sheikh Fares district of Aleppo.

BEIRUT: Fierce clashes broke out Tuesday between Syrian rebels and regime forces battling for control of a border crossing on the frontier with Turkey, and Turkish authorities told residents to evacuate the area.

On the diplomatic front, a spokesman for Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi said the Egyptian leader told Iran's foreign minister in a meeting in Cairo that relations between the two countries were being hindered by Tehran's support for Damascus.

Spokesman Yasser Ali said Mursi told Ali Akbar Salehi that as president he could not ignore the fact that Egyptian public opinion was overwhelmingly against the Syrian regime, which he said "uses harsh language and violence against people."

Iran's proposal for a halt to the violence emerged at a meeting in Cairo Monday of the Syria Contact Group to which it, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey belong, Tehran's official IRNA news agency said.

Salehi appealed for "a simultaneous halt in clashes and violence by the sides in Syria [and] insisted on a peaceful solution without foreign intervention and a halt to financial, military and training support for the Syrian opposition," IRNA reported.

He also suggested that observers from the countries could "monitor the process of

stopping the violence in Syria," IRNA added.

Last month, the United Nations withdrew its own observers after both sides failed to adhere to an April cease-fire to which they had committed.

Salehi, whose country is a crucial ally of the Assad regime, is traveling Wednesday to Syria, where he will meet with Assad and other government officials.

A Turkish official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said government forces and rebels were engaged "in very fierce" battles near the border crossing of Tal Abyad.

One woman was hit by a stray bullet and hospitalized in the Turkish border town of Akcakale.

The Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency said six Syrians were injured in the clashes and brought across the border for treatment. Akcakale authorities told residents living close to the frontier to evacuate the area.

Turkish state TV TRT also said some rebels fled to Akcakale.

Syrian opposition groups had no immediate word on whether rebels succeeded in gaining control of the crossing, although several videos detailing the advance by the rebels were posted on YouTube.

The activists who narrated the videos acknowledged that government forces were shelling Tal Abyad Tuesday, but from outside the town, after having lost control of it.

Syria's state-run news agency, SANA, acknowledged that government troops were busy "pursuing armed terrorist groups" in the area and claimed that all of the rebels had been killed.

It is believed to be the first time that Syrian rebels have tried to seize the border area in the northern governorate of Raqqa, most of which is controlled by Assad's forces. Rebels control several other border crossings into Turkey. Elsewhere, clashes between government troops and rebels erupted in several neighborhoods of the city of Aleppo, while the pro-opposition, London-based Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights said at least seven people were killed when the army tried to enter several neighborhoods in southern Damascus.

The Local Coordination Committees, a network of activists in the country, said that 145 people were killed in Tuesday's violence, including 65 in Damascus and surrounding areas.

Meanwhile, Syrian refugees at a Jordanian camp pelted the U.N.-Arab envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's convoy with stones during a protest over the international community's failure to stop the bloodshed.

Brahimi, who visited another camp in Turkey the same day, has himself called his task "nearly impossible." But some in Jordan's Zaatari camp shouted slogans implying that his initiative, which involves meetings with Assad, only legitimizes the Damascus regime. "Leave our camp. By seeing Bashar, you've extended his life," some 200 refugees chanted.



Jordan hosts over 200,000 displaced Syrians – the largest number in the region. The 31,000 residents of the Zaatari camp have frequently protested against conditions in their settlement, located on a plain in the northern desert. Jordan says the huge influx of Syrians has put pressure on its infrastructure and social services.

Brahimi also toured a camp in the Turkish border province of Hatay. Dozens of refugees protested outside the camp, waving a rebel flag and denouncing Assad.

Some 83,000 refugees have found shelter in 12 camps along the Turkish border.

Brahimi said it appeared refugees were being treated well in Turkey and that he hoped for an end to the violence. “We hope that their country finds peace again and they can return to their country as early as possible,” he said.

Also Tuesday, Turkey’s Foreign Ministry brushed off Syrian accusations that it was allowing thousands of Muslim extremists to cross into its territory.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Selcuk Unal said Turkey may not even respond to letters Syria sent to the U.N. Security Council and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon accusing Turkey of allowing thousands of terrorists access to the country.

“Instead of leveling complaints and making false accusations against various countries, including ours, Syria should look at the situation inside the country and take the required steps to correct the situation,” he said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Sep-19/188496-mursi-warns-iran-its-support-for-assad-hampering-relations-with-egypt.ashx#axzz26uU6nncj>

- **Libyan brigade warns of "inferno" if U.S. intervenes**

BENGHAZI, Libya: A Libyan Salafi group which has denied it was involved in a deadly assault on the American consulate

in Benghazi said on Tuesday Libya would turn into "an inferno for U.S. troops" if the U.S. military retaliated.

Yousef Jehani, a senior member of Ansar al-Sharia, told Reuters that the armed group, which espouses an austere form of Islam, wanted to avoid confrontation but was ready for a showdown if Washington acted "foolishly".

Any U.S. military intervention could push Libyans to wage a holy war, or "jihad", to defend their nation, said Jehani, whose group is a powerful force in Benghazi, a stronghold for Islamists and cradle of the revolution which toppled Muammar Gaddafi last year.

"If one U.S. soldier arrives, not for the purpose of defending the embassy, but to repeat what happened in Iraq or Afghanistan, be sure that all battalions in Libya and all Libyans will put aside all their differences and rally behind one goal of hitting America and Americans," Jehani said.

The consulate attack was part of wider anti-American protests that erupted across the Middle East over an obscure,

amateurish U.S.-made video that insulted the Prophet Mohammad.

Libya closed its air space over Benghazi airport temporarily due to heavy anti-aircraft fire by Islamists aiming at U.S. reconnaissance drones flying over the city, days after the U.S. ambassador and three other Americans died in the attack.

The closure of the airport prompted speculation that the United States was deploying special forces in preparation for an attack against the assailants of the consulate. Two U.S. warships headed for the coast off Libya.

DRONES OVER BENGHAZI

A Libyan official said the spy planes flew over the embassy compound and the city, where Ansar al-Sharia controls a major security compound and a hospital, taking photos and inspecting locations of radical militant groups suspected of planning and staging the attack on the U.S. consulate.

Jehani said senior commanders within pro-government paramilitary units had exonerated Ansar al-Sharia and none of its members was among 50 people the

Libyan authorities had identified as having been involved in the attack.

"We are against the killing of the ambassador as he has not committed a crime to be killed for but if America uses this as an excuse, Libya will be an inferno for U.S. troops," Jehani said, adding that his group was "highly" prepared.

Although no group has claimed responsibility for the attack, some Libyan officials and foreign analysts have pointed the finger at the Salafi group.

Ansar al-Sharia is part of a wider Salafi movement whose members try to model their lives on the early followers of the Prophet Mohammad. Not all Salafis, however, embrace the violent militancy of groups such as al Qaeda that have a similar purist vision of Islam.

Ansar al-Sharia, which incurred persecution for opposing Gaddafi's rule, has been accused by pro-government paramilitary units of involvement in several violent incidents in Libya's second city in recent months. The eastern city harbours deep grievances over western

Libya's control of oil pumped from the east.

A year after the end of Gaddafi's four decades of one-man rule, when many state institutions withered, armed militias spawned by the revolution still provide what passes for official security - when they are not threatening it.

Libya's new leaders, backed by their Western allies, have been gambling they can forge a political consensus which will seize power back from the heavily-armed revolutionaries in the streets before rivalries spin irretrievably out of control.

AMERICANS WOULD BE TARGETS

U.S. citizens would become legitimate targets if Washington sent any troops to target Islamist groups, Jehani said.

"Libyans will wage jihad. The U.S. will be hit much harder than in Afghanistan and even U.S. nationals would be targeted because the American presence would be considered an invasion."

Jehani held Washington responsible for the deaths at the consulate, saying the

United States should have looked after the ambassador at a time when passions were running high amongst Libyans over the video mocking the Prophet Mohammad.

"U.S. policy is to blame for the result ... They should know better the sensitivities of Muslims towards their religious symbols, and America should have known that this would bring it the wrath of all Muslims," Jehani said, adding: "They should have put their ambassador in a safe place for a while."

Ostensibly the attack on the embassy was sparked by the film but some Libyan officials suggested it was pre-planned to coincide with the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks and in revenge for the killing of a senior Libyan al Qaeda aide.

Jehani said his group was not ready to hand over its weapons until pro-government military units were cleansed of what he said were elements left over from the Gaddafi era.

The biggest challenge the new Libyan authorities face is to impose authority

over a myriad of armed groups who refuse to surrender their weapons.

The failure of successive efforts in the past year to persuade the ex-rebel militias to disband and disarm, or to transfer loyalties clearly to the interim leadership, itself a fractious body, has left many sceptical of future prospects.

"The army has not purged itself until now of the remnants from the old regime and Gaddafi's men," Jehani said. "How can I give my weapons or hand my neck to people incapable of achieving security and without competence?"

Ansar al-Sharia says that supporters of Gaddafi joined some militias and are now on the government payroll. The group, which lost many fighters on the frontline, says it has been subjected to a campaign to marginalise and undermine it.

Jehani said brigades such as Ansar al-Sharia, many of whose senior leaders had spent years in Gaddafi's jails, would resist a new political order that empowered veteran opposition figures who spent years in comfortable exile in the West and

excluded those who paid dearly for their country's freedom.

"We reject those who take power and apply a foreign agenda and do not see the interest of Libya and only look after their personal gain." Jehani said.

"We fear what happened in Iraq, when agents of foreigners came on a U.S. tank and took power and we don't want this to happen here in Libya. We will not allow it to happen."

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Sep-18/188445-libyan-brigade-warns-of-inferno-if-us-intervenues.ashx#axzz26uU6nncj>

- **Haniyeh visit strains Egypt-Palestinian relations**

Senior Hamas leader Ismail Haniyah leads a prayer in front of the headquarters of the Egyptian embassy in Gaza City, during a rally in show of solidarity with the Egyptian people, 6 August 2012. Egypt branded Islamist gunmen who killed 16 police near the Israeli border as "infidels" and promised on Monday to launch a crackdown following the massacre that

has strained Cairo's ties with both Israel and Palestinians.

Tensions between Egypt and the Palestinian Authority have emerged after Egyptian Prime Minister Hesham Qandil received the head of the government in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh.

The Palestinian Authority is dominated by Fatah and controls the West Bank, while Fatah's archrivals Hamas control the Gaza Strip.

Head of the executive office of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Saleh Raafat, criticized the top-level meetings with Hamas figures. He suggested that talks between Qandil and Haniyeh on Monday about security and economic issues send the wrong message to the Hamas leadership. He claimed that it would encourage them to effect a permanent separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Raafat called on the Egyptian government to stop holding talks with Haniyeh and his accompanying delegation. He reiterated his belief that there is only one legitimate

Palestinian president, and that is Mahmoud Abbas.

The Palestinian Authority also issued a statement last week criticizing countries receiving Haniyeh, claiming that it damages efforts at reconciliation.

Hamas government spokesperson, Taher al-Nunu, said that Raafat's statements themselves entrench conflict amongst the Palestinian people.

Egyptian security sources revealed that head of intelligence, Raafat Shehata, met on Tuesday with a Hamas delegation headed by top Hamas figure Khaled Mashaal to discuss a Palestinian reconciliation deal.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/haniyeh-visit-strains-egypt-palestinian-relations>

- **We don't use force against peaceful protesters: Egyptian cabinet**

Hisham Qandil Cabinet asserts that it never ordered dispersal of 'peaceful, legitimate' demonstrations by force, despite considerable recent evidence to contrary

The Egyptian Cabinet on Tuesday asserted that it had never issued orders to forcefully disperse peaceful demonstrators, despite more than one recent incident suggesting otherwise.

"The Cabinet denies recent reports about the forceful dispersal of peaceful protests, affirming the right of citizens to stage peaceful and legal demonstrations...without hindering the affairs of other citizens or damaging public or private property," Prime Minister Hisham Qandil's Cabinet declared in a Tuesday statement.

The statement comes against the backdrop of weeks of violent clashes near the US embassy in Cairo between security forces and demonstrators following the appearance of a short film denigrating Islam and the Prophet Mohamed. Tuesday's Cabinet statement, however, appeared to imply that protests recently dispersed by security forces had not been peaceful in nature.

Since Saturday, the first day of Egypt's new academic year, the country has witnessed a wave of labour strikes – by

university workers, school teachers and bus drivers, among others – which, informed sources say, were forcibly dispersed.

On Monday, security forces, acting on court order, broke up a sit-in staged by faculty members and students – of which two were arrested – at Nile University in 6 October City. The sit-in was organised as a response to a prolonged dispute over ownership of the university's campus.

"Yesterday, police wanted to enter the bus drivers' sit-in by force and arrest the spokesman of the independent workers union, but workers resisted and the spokesman turned himself in. Now he's facing charges of inciting the strike," said Hisham Fouad, researcher at Egypt's Welad El-Ard Labour Research Centre.

"On the same day, police also dismantled tents at a teachers' sit-in being held in front of Cabinet headquarters," he added.

Fouad went on to point to "several forms of harassment" recently used by police and administrative authorities against strikers, in addition to outright dispersals by force, including unjustified dismissals.

Egypt in recent years has witnessed an increase in labour strikes, especially after the ouster of Hosni Mubarak in early 2011. Mass strikes are also believed to have played an important role in the build-up to last year's January 25 Revolution.

Prime Minister Hisham Qandil was appointed by President Mohamed Morsi in late July.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/53246.aspx>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

• Security forces disperse protest “by force” in Beirut

Security forces on Wednesday broke up a demonstration calling for a modern electoral law “by force” in front of the parliament in Downtown Beirut, New TV reported.

The demonstration was held as the parliamentary joint committees convened to discuss electoral draft laws.

Ayman Dandash, one of the protesters, told New TV that there were around 40 protesters and that security forces “attacked them” to disperse the gathering.

According to the report, security forces also confiscated some cellular phones that were used to record the “security forces’ suppression” against protesters.

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

- **Assailants fire on KFC in Lebanon’s Nabatieh, no casualties**

Unknown assailants opened fire on a KFC restaurant in Lebanon’s southern town of Nabatieh in the early hours of Wednesday in reaction against an anti-Islam film that sparked global protests, NOW’s correspondent reported.

The shooting caused damage inside the restaurant, but no casualties were reported. NOW’s correspondent said the employees had left the building before the shooting took place.

Following the incident, a Lebanese army patrol and forensic investigators arrived on the scene and began an investigation.

The restaurant was opened later in the day, NOW’s correspondent added.

The low-budget movie, "Innocence of Muslims" in which actors have strong American accents, portrays Muslims as immoral and gratuitously violent.

It pokes fun at the Prophet Mohammed and touches on themes of pedophilia and homosexuality, while showing him sleeping with women, talking about killing children and referring to a donkey as "the first Muslim animal."

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

- **Charbel visits Roumieh Prison to discuss Islamists’ situation**

Interior Minister Marwan Charbel said in remarks published on Wednesday by Al-Jumhuriya that he recently visited Islamist prisoners at the Roumieh Prison to discuss their situation.

The minister said that his visit lasted for three hours, during which he informed the detainees that the courtroom for trying them “will be ready very soon.”

Many Islamists have been detained and held without charge in Roumieh Prison. Their case has caused riots in the prison as well as protests by their families, particularly in North Lebanon.

Charbel added that trials will probably begin next month.

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

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6. SYRIA

- **Details of Iran’s proposals at Cairo meeting on Syria released**

TEHRAN, Sept. 18 (MNA) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has proposed that observers from a contact group on Syria comprising Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey be dispatched to the crisis-hit country and announced that Tehran is ready to host a meeting of the group.

According to a statement issued by the Iranian Foreign Ministry on Monday, Salehi made the remarks during a foreign ministerial meeting of the group that was held in Cairo on the same day.

The meeting in Cairo was described as the quartet meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, but neither Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal nor any other Saudi Arabian official attended the meeting.

Egyptian presidential spokesman Yasser Ali and an unidentified Arab League official said that Faisal did not attend the meeting for health reasons, but Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Kamel Amr stated that Faisal's absence was due to previously arranged engagements, Reuters reported on Monday.

After the meeting in Cairo, the Egyptian foreign minister announced that the contact group would meet again on the sidelines of the 67th regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, which opened at the UN Headquarters in New York on Tuesday and closes on September 30.

Following is the translation of the Iranian Foreign Ministry statement:

Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi put forward the approach and the road map proposed by the Islamic Republic of Iran

to find a way out of the Syrian crisis at the quartet meeting of the foreign ministers of Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Within this framework, on Monday... our country's foreign minister proposed (the following points) for discussion at the Cairo meeting:

- 1) Announcing a halt to the conflict and the violence by both sides simultaneously;
- 2) Emphasizing the peaceful settlement of the crisis without foreign intervention;
- 3) Ending any kind of financial, military, and training support to armed groups;
- 4) Launching talks between the Syrian government and the opposition;
- 5) Establishing a national reconciliation committee with the participation of all movements and groups;
- 6) Dispatching observers from the four countries to supervise the process of ending the violence and holding negotiations;

7) Emphasizing the necessity of maintaining Syria's cohesion, national unity, and territorial integrity;

8) Contributing to the process of fundamental reforms;

9) Realizing a Syrian-Syrian democratic approach.

Dr. Salehi also pointed to the fact that the suffering of the Syrian people, (and) particularly the sanctions and economic punishments, necessitate that Muslim countries, including the four known regional powers (scheduled to be) present at the meeting, intensify and pool their efforts to ship economic and humanitarian aid and proposed that a committee be established to end the suffering of the Syrian people for the realization of this goal.

The foreign minister emphasized that the Syrian people should determine their (own) destiny themselves and within the framework of maintenance of territorial integrity, independence, sovereignty, and national unity, and said, "Regional countries should ensure the accomplishment of this process through

utilization of all resources and the current potential and constant consultation."

He emphasized, "While emphasizing the necessity of the implementation of fundamental reforms, the Islamic Republic of Iran, throughout the Syrian developments, has proposed feasible and practical solutions to help end the violence by both sides and initiate a dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition... (at) the Tehran Consultative Meeting on Syria, which was held with the participation of 30 countries (on August 9), and also... (at) the Mecca summit (on August 14 and 15) and... the recent meeting of the Non-Aligned (Movement) countries in Tehran (from August 26 to 31)."

Salehi emphasized that most regional countries are concerned about the repercussions of the armed presence of extremist movements on regional security and stability, and said, "We believe that the complete failure of political solutions can pave the way for fitna (sedition) in various forms and its spread to neighboring countries and the entire region."

He added, “Unfortunately, most Western countries, which are in a quandary (due to their failure to) perceive the realities and the mission of regional nations’ uprisings, have closed their eyes to the realities of the region by prioritizing the interests of the Zionist regime and are preventing the realization and the implementation of true reforms in Syria and the region through providing comprehensive financial and military support to unknown armed groups.”

In addition, our country’s foreign minister pointed to the good potential of the Non-Aligned Movement to play an effective role in regional and global developments after the holding of the summit of the heads of state (and government) of the Non-Aligned (Movement) in Tehran and described the participation of Iran and Egypt of the NAM troika in the Cairo meeting as beneficial and called for the inclusion of Venezuela, as a member of the troika of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Iraq, as the rotating president of the Arab League, to the present group so that the current constructive process will come to fruition.

Salehi pointed to the necessity of the continuation of consultation between the participants of the Cairo meeting and active movements and groups in Syria, and added, “Such consultations can offer new prospects, not only in regard to Syrian developments but also in regard to current and future crises, and, according to this perspective, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to host the next round of the meeting (of the contact group) in Tehran.”

At the beginning of his speech, the foreign minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran thanked the Egyptian government for hosting the quartet meeting and also the deputy (foreign ministers) meeting (on September 10) and said that this illustrates the prevalence of collective wisdom in the region.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1699569>

- **Salehi proposes Iran, Egypt, S. Arabia, Turkey to send observers to Syria**

TEHRAN, Sept. 18 (MNA) - In the four-party meeting in Cairo on Monday, Iranian foreign minister suggested that Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to send observer groups to Syria.

Ali Akbar Salehi stated that observers from the four countries monitor the process of stopping violence in Syria.

To stop the violence in the country, Salehi called for talks to assist a democratic approach in Syria and a peaceful solution without the intervention of foreigners.

Salehi also offered to host the next four-party meeting in Iran.

The Saudi Arabian foreign minister was not present at the Cairo meeting due to health problems.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1699351>

- **Iran's foreign minister arrives in Damascus for talks**

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has arrived in the Syrian capital, Damascus, to hold talks with the country's officials on the Syrian crisis.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011.

Damascus says outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorists are behind the unrest while the opposition accuses the security forces of being behind the violence.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/19/262395/irans-salehi-arrives-in-syria-for-talks/>

- **Syrian regime 'will deploy chemical weapons as last resort'**

The Syrian regime plans to deploy chemical weapons against its own people "as a last resort", the former head of Syria's chemical arsenal has said in an interview with a British newspaper.

Syrian rebels help a wounded comrade who survived a Syrian army strike outside a hospital in the northern city of Aleppo: Syrian regime 'will deploy chemical weapons as last resort'

Syrian rebels help a wounded comrade who survived a Syrian army strike outside a hospital in the northern city of Aleppo

Major-General Adnan Sillu said he defected from the Syrian army three months ago after being party to top-levels talks about the use of chemical weapons on both rebel fighters and civilians.

"We were in a serious discussion about the use of chemical weapons, including how we would use them and in what areas," he told The Times, referring to a meeting held at Syria's chemical weapons centre south of Damascus.

"We discussed this as a last resort – such as if the regime lost control of an important area such as Aleppo."

Speaking from Turkey, General Sillu said he was certain President Bashar al-Assad's regime would eventually use chemical weapons against civilians, adding that the discussion had been "the last straw" which triggered his defection.

His comments come after German press reported on Tuesday that the Syrian army had tested a chemical weapons delivery system.

In his first interview since his defection, General Sillu said the Syrian regime had also considered supplying chemical weapons to the Lebanon-based militant group Hizbollah.

"They wanted to place warheads with the chemical weapons on missiles – to transfer them this way to Hizbollah. It was for use against Israel, of course," he said.

He suggested that the regime now had "nothing to lose" in sharing the weapons and added: "If a war starts between Hizbollah and Israel it will be only good for Syria."

Members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard also attended numerous meetings to discuss the use of chemical weapons, he said.

"They were always coming to visit and to advise. They were always sending us scientists and bringing our scientists to them. They were also involved on the political side of how to use the chemical weapons."

The German magazine Der Spiegel, citing "witnesses, reported Monday that the Syrian army has tested a chemical weapons delivery system, firing shells at a research centre in its northwestern desert region.

"Five or six empty shells devised for delivering chemical agents were fired by tanks and aircraft, at a site called Diraiham in the desert near the village of Khanasir," east of the city of Aleppo, Der Spiegel reported.

The Safira research centre in question is regarded as Syria's largest testing site for chemical weapons.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/9552147/Syrian-regime-will-deploy-chemical-weapons-as-last-resort.html>

- **Turkish Public Sours on Syrian Uprising**

ISTANBUL — As the war in Syria rages next door, Turks have grown increasingly weary of nearly daily reports of troubles at home: Iranian spies working with Kurdish insurgents, soldiers ambushed and killed, millions spent caring for a flood of refugees, lost trade and havoc in border villages.

"This is how we start our morning," Mehmet Krasuleymanoglu, a bookseller in a narrow alley in central Istanbul, said recently as he laid out several

newspapers, each with a blaring headline about an explosion at a munitions depot that killed more than two dozen soldiers. The government called it an accident, but in the current environment, many Turks, including Mr. Krasuleymanoglu, are not so sure.

"What do we have to do with Syria?" he said. "The prime minister and his wife used to go there for tea and coffee."

The Turkish government is facing a spasm of reproach from its own people over its policy of supporting Syria's uprising; hosting fighters in the south, opposition figures in Istanbul and refugees on the border; and helping to ferry arms to the opposition. While many Turks at first supported the policy as a stand for democracy and change, many now believe that it is leading to instability at home, undermining Turkey's own economy and security.

Turkey's call for military intervention, which much of the international community opposes, has only added to the domestic frustration. Now, in the wake of the anti-American protests that have convulsed the Muslim world in

reaction to a film that denigrated Islam, it seems less likely that Turkey will find partners in the West to join its call for military action in Syria.

The souring mood presents the first obvious setback for the foreign policy of Turkey's prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has ridden the turmoil of the Arab Spring to promote Turkey's influence abroad and his standing at home.

Suddenly, Turkey appears vulnerable on multiple fronts.

"A lot of Turks are seeing this as a direct result of Turkey's aggressive posture against Assad," said Soner Cagaptay, the director of the Turkish Research Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, referring to the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad.

In the face of criticism from columnists and opposition politicians, and signs of rising public opposition to its Syria policy, the country is being compelled to reassess its overall strategy for spreading its influence and interests across the Middle East, including Egypt, Iraq and Iran.

Increasingly frustrated with its efforts to join the European Union, Turkey turned noticeably toward regaining and elevating its standing in the Muslim world, especially amid the chaos and reordering of alliances caused by the Arab Spring.

"Turkey's Syria policy has failed," wrote Dogan Heper, a columnist for the newspaper Milliyet. "It has turned our neighbors into enemies. We have been left alone in the world."

Selcuk Unal, the spokesman for Turkey's Foreign Ministry, acknowledged that the Syria policy had become a domestic policy issue. Even though it may not be popular, he said, "that doesn't mean it is wrong."

"I don't think we are wrong so far," Mr. Unal said. "Turkey is on the right side of history on this."

Before the Arab uprisings, economic and political engagement with Syria was a centerpiece of Turkey's regional strategy, which some described as an effort to integrate the Middle East along the lines of the European Union. Visa restrictions were lifted and trade increased. Mr. Erdogan and Mr. Assad even vacationed

together. Initially, Turkey urged dialogue and reform in Syria, but as the killing increased, Turkey turned against the government.

That shift was part of its broader regional strategy. Last year Prime Minister Erdogan toured Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, offering Turkey's support for the democratic aspirations of the Arab world's revolutionaries, and holding up Turkey's mix of Islam, democracy and economic prosperity as an inspiration for those countries in turmoil.

Turkey, it seemed, was ascendant, and the public was largely supportive.

"We loved it," said Soli Ozel, an academic and columnist. "It was like, we're back. The empire is back."

Perhaps causing the greatest unease for Turks these days is an increase in violence by Turkey's separatist Kurdistan Workers Party, or P.K.K., which seems emboldened by the success of Syria's Kurds in gaining territory. The P.K.K. has waged an insurgency against Turkey since the 1980s in a conflict that has claimed an estimated 40,000 lives.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/19/world/europe/turks-weary-of-leaders-support-for-syria-uprising.html? r=1>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• Bahrain seizes items Iran likely sought for nukes

Gulf states confiscate items en route to Iran, including material crucial to development of advanced nuclear enrichment technology.

UNITED NATIONS - Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have confiscated a number of items Iran may have sought for its nuclear program, a development that diplomats said showed how enforcement of UN sanctions against Tehran is steadily improving.

One of the items heading to Iran but confiscated by Bahrain was carbon fiber, the diplomats told Reuters, a dual-use material UN experts have said would be crucial if Iran was to develop more advanced nuclear enrichment centrifuge technology.

Bahrain's and UAE's confidential reports to the UN Security Council's Iran sanctions committee are politically significant, envoys said on condition of anonymity, since they highlight how more and more states are enforcing the sanctions and making it increasingly difficult for Tehran to flout them.

"The fact that these two countries are now taking steps to enforce the sanctions and reporting those steps to the UN is remarkable by itself," a senior Security Council diplomat told Reuters. "It shows that the UN sanctions regime can work. UAE has been one of Iran's enablers. Iran's becoming more isolated."

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that Tehran was close to being able to build a nuclear bomb, and US President Barack Obama is under pressure ahead of November's election from political opponents who argue that sanctions are not doing enough to stop Iran building a bomb.

The emirate Dubai has long been one of Iran's main transit hubs because of its busy port and position as a key financial center. The Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace think-tank wrote in July 2011 th at Dubai was "a top source of Iranian imports and a key transshipment point for goods - legal and illegal - destined for the Islamic Republic."

But pressure from the United States and other Western powers to crack down on Iranian sanctions violations has borne some fruit in the form of redoubled efforts to enforce the sanctions and report to the sanctions committee, Western envoys say.

The Security Council imposed four rounds of UN sanctions on Tehran between 2006 and 2010 to punish it for defying Security Council demands that it suspend uranium enrichment and other sensitive nuclear activities.

Tehran rejects charges it is developing the capability to produce atomic weapons. Iran says its nuclear program is intended solely for the peaceful production of electricity.

UAE officials insist that the country's policy has always been to fully abide by UN regulations and cooperate with the sanctions committee. A UAE official who

declined to be identified played down the reports to the Iran committee.

"All incidents were reported at the time when they happened, and there has been no incident in more than a year," the official told Reuters. He did not comment further.

Bahrain's mission to the United Nations in New York did not reply to a request for comment, and officials in Bahrain were not immediately available to comment.

Bahrain has become increasingly annoyed with what it says are attempts by Iran to undermine its government. The Sunni-led island, along with fellow Gulf Arab countries, have accused Shi 'ite-led Iran of being behind the unrest in the region. Tehran denies fomenting problems in Bahrain.

UN diplomats say China, Russia, Turkey must step up sanctions enforcement

UN diplomats say that some countries could also do more to enforce the sanctions. They say it is important for China, Russia, India, Turkey and others to counter Iranian attempts to use their

territory to circumvent international sanctions.

The UAE reported to the council's Iran sanctions committee that it had made some 15 interceptions of suspicious items bound for Iran over the last three years, diplomats said.

"Some of those items have been cleared as OK but some remain under investigation," a UN diplomatic source told Reuters.

Diplomats said that reports from the UAE, Bahrain and other countries would likely be mentioned in a briefing later this week for the 15-nation council by Colombia's UN envoy Nestor Osorio, who chairs the Iran sanctions committee.

Osorio's report was expected to leave out the names of the countries that submitted reports to the committee in keeping with council tradition on such delicate matters, envoys said.

In some cases, the UAE returned seized items to the original shipping countries, diplomats said. Among the firms involved in the procurement efforts the UAE

uncovered was Kalaye Electric Co. in Tehran, the former center of Iran's enrichment centrifuge research and development program, envoys said.

There were no details available on the items confiscated by UAE authorities, but the three items Bahrain intercepted included carbon fiber, a dual-use material that the UN expert panel identified in a May 2012 report as key for the further development of Iran's uranium enrichment centrifuge program.

It remains unclear if Iran wanted the carbon fiber for its nuclear program, diplomats said.

The last round of UN sanctions adopted in June 2010 established the panel of experts to monitor compliance with the UN measures and gave countries the authority to inspect all cargo going to and from Iran and seize any banned items.

The United States and European Union have also imposed their own much more draconian sanctions.

<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?ID=285466&R=R1>

- **Saudi beheads Pakistani national for drug smuggling**

Saudi Arabia beheaded a Pakistani national on Wednesday in the holy city of Medina after convicting him of drug smuggling, the Interior Ministry said.

Bashir Khamis Ahmad was found guilty of trying to smuggle large quantities of heroin into the kingdom, the ministry said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

The beheading brings to 60 the number of people executed in Saudi Arabia so far this year, according to an AFP tally based on official reports.

Amnesty International says 79 people were put to death in the Gulf kingdom last year.

Rape, murder, apostasy, armed robbery and drug trafficking are all punishable by death under its strict version of sharia, or Islamic law.

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

- **Google responds to Saudi request on anti-Islam movie**

Google began blocking the YouTube pages accessing the anti-Islam movie in Saudi Arabia after the kingdom threatened to block YouTube entirely, Saudi daily Al-Riyadh reported on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's Communications and Information Technology Commission ordered host companies in the kingdom to block this movie from Internet users and has also requested Google to block all YouTube links carrying the film.

The low-budget film "Innocence of Muslims," incited a wave of bloody anti-American violence in cities across the Muslim world which targeted symbols of US influence ranging from embassies and schools to fast food chains.

At least 30 people have died so far in unrest connected to the film in over 20 countries.

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

- **Saudi Arabia beheads citizen for murder**

Saudi Arabia beheaded one of its citizens on Tuesday after convicting him of murder, the Interior Ministry said.

Mufreh bin Mohammed al-Assiri was found guilty of shooting dead another Saudi, Salman bin Issa al-Assiri, the ministry said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

The beheading in the southwestern Asir region brings to 59 the number of people executed in Saudi Arabia so far this year, according to an AFP tally based on official reports.

Amnesty International says 79 people were put to death in the Gulf kingdom last year.

Rape, murder, apostasy, armed robbery and drug trafficking are all punishable by death under its strict version of sharia, or Islamic law.

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8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Coalition Suspends Joint Operations With Afghan Forces

September 18, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

The NATO-led international coalition in Afghanistan (ISAF) says a decision to curtail joint operations with Afghan forces is a "temporary" response to a "current threat."

Earlier on September 18, U.S. Lieutenant General James Terry, the senior U.S. commander in Afghanistan, issued an order suspending joint operations for units smaller than 800-troop battalions.

The decision was made in the wake of a spate of incidents in which Afghan soldiers and police -- or insurgents posing as them -- turned their weapons on coalition forces. At least 51 coalition troops have been killed in such insider attacks -- also called "blue-on-green" attacks -- since the beginning of the year.

British Defense Secretary Phillip Hammond told parliament on September

18 that the order would have "minimal impact" on operations.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague also said the impact on operations would be "absolutely minimal."

"We will not be giving in to 'green-on-blue' attacks. We will improve our capability to deal with that, and that is what is going on now," Hague said. "So I do not think we should raise the [prospect] of a major change in our approach to Afghanistan, because we need to overcome this problem now."

Two British soldiers were among six coalition troops killed during an insider attack by Afghan police over the weekend.

NATO plans to hand over security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014, but the move to reduce joint operations has been seen as an obstacle to that target. British Labour Party lawmaker Denis MacShane said the decision seems to reverse "the whole axis of U.S. and U.K. strategy in Afghanistan."

Coalition spokesman Major Adam Wojack said the new order will affect the "vast

majority" of the 350,000-strong Afghan security forces, which will now have to conduct operations without support from its allies.

Air support, including medical evacuations by air, will not be affected by the order, a NATO spokesman said. Noncombat training operations will also continue.

General Afzal Aman, head of operations for the Afghan Defense Department, told Reuters that his office has not "heard officially from foreign forces" about the order.

U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, speaking while on a visit to Beijing, said the order would not delay the planned withdrawal of coalition combat troops by the end of 2014.

With reporting by AFP and Reuters

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

- **Afghan police prevent protesters from gathering at Bagram airbase**

Press TV

September 18, 2012

Afghan police forces have blocked hundreds of anti-Islam movie protesters from moving toward the US-run Bagram Airbase, Press TV reports.

Earlier on Tuesday, university students gathered in the northern Konduz Province in protest against the blasphemous film insulting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Demonstrations against the movie have been held across the Muslim world, with the protesters in some countries marching on the US embassies and torching the US flags.

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

- **Afghanistan Suicide Bombing Linked to Anti-Islam Film**

VOA News

September 18, 2012

A suicide bomber has killed at least 12 people in an attack on a mini-bus carrying foreigners near the Afghan capital.

Police say nine foreign workers, their Afghan driver, and two other Afghans were killed when the bomber detonated a car full of explosives near the bus Tuesday

on the highway to the Kabul airport. South Africa's Foreign Ministry confirmed eight of the dead were South Africans.

Afghan insurgent group Hezb-e-Islami claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it sent a female bomber in response to an anti-Islam, online video that has sparked worldwide protests, including in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, NATO confirmed it is scaling back joint operations with Afghan security forces amid a series of recent insider attacks and the release of the video.

Fifty-one international troops have been killed this year in at least 30 insider attacks.

Coalition spokesman Charlie Stadtlander said in a statement, "most partnering and advising will now be at the battalion level and above. The need for partnering below that level "will be evaluated on a case by case basis by RC [regional] commanders."

Stadtlander said the head of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, General John Allen, directed all operational commanders to review force protection

and tactical activities "in light of the current circumstances." The guidance was given at the recommendation of, and in conjunction with, key Afghan leaders.

Britain's Foreign Secretary William Hague played down the measure in comments to British lawmakers on Tuesday, saying the impact on British operations "will be minimal." In a statement issued later on Tuesday, NATO reaffirmed that it remains "committed to partnering with, training, advising and assisting Afghan forces."

In Beijing, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told reporters the insider attacks were a matter of concern but that General Allen is taking the necessary steps to counter the problem. Panetta added that NATO's plan to handover security responsibility to Afghan forces by the end of 2014 remained on track.

NATO separately issued a statement recognizing Kabul police's "proactive role" in maintaining control of recent demonstrations and its efforts to "maintain public calm." NATO reiterated its condemnation of the "inappropriate videos that were disrespectful" toward

Islam and "contrary to the thoughts and values of the coalition."

Also Monday, NATO said it has sent a team to investigate a coalition operation that resulted in "several Afghan civilian casualties" in eastern Afghanistan.

Afghan officials said a coalition airstrike Sunday killed eight women as they gathered firewood in Laghman province.

NATO said it targeted a large group of armed individuals showing hostile intent. It says the airstrike killed several insurgents and also resulted in the "unintentional deaths of a number of Afghan civilians."

NATO says it takes civilian casualties seriously and will conduct a complete assessment of the incident. The coalition offered its "sincerest regret" to the families of those killed.

This week's violence comes just days after insurgents dressed in U.S. Army uniforms attacked a British military base in the southern province of Helmand. The militants, armed with automatic rifles, rocket propelled grenade launchers and

suicide vests killed two U.S. Marines and destroyed jets and refueling stations during Friday's assault in Camp Bastion.

Tuesday, NATO said an Afghan and coalition force arrested one of the Taliban leaders behind the Camp Bastion attack during an operation in the Nad Ali district of Helmand province.

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

- **S. African government confirms 8 nationals killed in Afghanistan suicide attack**

JOHANNESBURG, Sept.18 (Xinhua) -- Eight South Africans were killed in the Afghanistan suicide attack on Tuesday morning, South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation said.

"Our mission in Pakistan which is accredited in Afghanistan has confirmed eight nationals were among the dead in the Kubul suicide attack," the department spokesperson Nelson Kgwete said.

The eight victims were working for a private aviation company in that country

as the explosion occurred, the spokesperson said.

Department of International Relations and Cooperation expressed its condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in the attack.

"We would give those families the assistance," said the spokesperson.

At around 6:45 a.m. local time, a Afghanistan suicide bomber rammed a explosive-laden vehicle into a minibus with foreigners aboard in the capital of Kabul, killing at least twelve people.

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

- **Suicide attack rocks Afghan eastern town, leaving two dead, two injured**

ASSADABAD, Afghanistan, Sept. 18 (Xinhua) -- A suicide attacker blew himself in Watapor district of Kunar province 185 km east of capital Kabul on Tuesday, which also killed one civilian and injured two others, a local official said.

"A man strapped explosive device in his body blew himself up near an under working bridge where several people

including workers and local officials were gathered, killing one civilian and injuring two others," the official told Xinhua but declined to be identified.

"The terrorist attack happened at 04:30 p.m. local time in Watapor district," he added.

Shir Wali, a spokesman with the police in the provincial capital Assadabad, confirmed the incident and said investigation is underway.

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

- **16 Taliban militants surrender in western Afghanistan**

HERAT, Afghanistan, Sept. 18 (Xinhua) -- A total of 16 Taliban militants surrendered to the government in western Afghan province of Herat, authorities said Tuesday.

"Up to 16 Taliban militants, who were active in Ghoryan district of Herat, handed over their weapons to the government and joined the national peace and reconciliation process Tuesday morning," governor of Herat, Daud Shah Saba, told Xinhua.

With the former insurgents' surrender, peace and stability would be further strengthened in several parts of the province with Herat city as its capital, 640 km west of Afghan capital Kabul.

A total of 11 Taliban militants laid down their arms in northern Kunduz province earlier Tuesday.

Taliban militants fighting Afghan and NATO-led troops have not made any comment yet.

The Afghan government set up a 70-member High Peace Council in the summer of 2010 to encourage Taliban to disarm and give up militancy against the government.

More than 3,500 anti-government insurgents have laid down their arms in Afghanistan over the past year, according to officials.

In an unrelated incident, four soldiers with the Afghan National Army were killed when their patrol was struck by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) or roadside bomb in Kushk district in

northern Herat city Monday evening, Saba confirmed.

Afghan Taliban has launched massive IED attacks against the NATO and Afghan security force in recent years.

<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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