



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

**The Restructuring Procces of Iraq**

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Maliki arrives to Najaf.**

Najaf / NINA / Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has arrived to the Najaf International Airport this morning 20, Sep to view and follow the large construction projects taking place in the province.



An official source in the province told the reporter / NINA / that al-Maliki will meet a number of officials in the governorate council to discuss the course of the work and the problems they face and ways to overcome them in addition to follow some of the important projects that are being implemented.

Maliki was received, at the airport in Najaf, by Adnan al-Zurfi the governor of Najaf and Fa'id Kazem Noon, head of the

provincial council and the council members and a number of officials.

The security services in Najaf have taken precautionary security measures in the main streets and its international airport.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GDIJEH](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GDIJEH)

- **Mayahi: Talabani, Maliki meeting is an implementing step toward treating the crisis**

Baghdad (NINA) – The White Iraqiya bloc official, Aziz Shareef al-Mayahi, described the meeting between President Jalal al-Talabani and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki as being an implementary step toward dealing with current political crisis.

In a statement to the press on Wednesday, Sep. 19, Mayahi welcomed the meeting between Talabani and Maliki, after the President has returned from his medical treatment trip to Germany; describing the meeting as being an implementing step toward solving current political crisis, and a finalizing step to a number of meetings between the Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament.

Mayahi called on political blocs to unite and agree for the unity of Iraq. He described the ongoing events in neighboring countries as dangerous requires from Iraqi politicians to unite and work out their differences over a dialogue table. He stressed that the climate is suitable for holding the National Meeting.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GDIHK](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GDIHK)

- **Talabani receives congratulations from Sistani.**



Baghdad / NINA / President Jalal Talabani has received a congratulation from the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

The Web site of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said today that the Office of the President Jalal Talabani received a telephone call from Sistani's office

welcoming Talabani's return to the homeland and wishing him full recovery.

During the call, Sistani hoped the excellent health for Talabani and the success his benevolent efforts.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GDIHGD](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GDIHGD)

- **Askari: "IS' nominees for Defense Minister's post rejected"**

Baghdad (AIN) –A leader within the State of Law Coalition criticized the list of candidates presented by the Iraqiya Slate to occupy the Minister of Defense post.

MP Sami al-Askari stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "The candidates presented by the Iraqiya Slate to occupy the post of the Defense Minister are repeated and were already rejected since the Defense Minister Post requires many criterions such as military experience and the nominee for this post should not be a political figure."

"The Prime Minister should not be forced to accept the candidates for the Defense Minister or Interior Minister posts," he added, noting that "These posts require a

harmony and cooperation with the Commanding General of the Iraqi Armed Forces to work together in running the security file.”

Earlier, MP Hasan Shuwairid of the Iraqiya Slate has announced that his Slate “Nominated four candidates to occupy the Defense Minister post.”

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19012:askari-is-nominees-for-defense-ministers-post-rejected&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19012:askari-is-nominees-for-defense-ministers-post-rejected&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19)

- **Basra MPs form bloc to support rehabilitating Basra province**

Baghdad (AIN) –Basra MPs announced forming a new parliamentary bloc to support the law draft of (Basra, Economic Capital of Iraq.)

Independent MP within the Iraqi National Alliance, Jawad al-Bazouni, stated to All Iraq News Agency Some of Basra MPs decided to form a bloc called (Loyalty to Basra) in order to demand for Basra rights and show support endorsing the law of Basra the economic capital of Iraq,” noting that “In case this law draft was delayed or

not endorsed, members of the bloc will suspend their membership in Parliament or may be resign until Basra province gets its rights.”

“The law draft of Basra as the economic capital of Iraq is more important of the Infrastructure law draft since its results will benefit the whole country since Basra enjoys natural resources and strategic location besides that the project will provide more than 250, 000 job opportunities for the citizens of the province who suffer marginalization represented by their absence from the Independent High Electoral Commission’s Board,” according to MP Bazouni.

“Some sides deliberately marginalize and hinder any project that might serve the people of Basra or the southern region of Iraq,” he concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19013:basra-mps-form-bloc-to-support-rehabilitating-basra-province-&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19013:basra-mps-form-bloc-to-support-rehabilitating-basra-province-&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19)

- **Talabani, Hakim discuss means of settling political crisis**

Baghdad (AIN) –The Head of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, Ammar al-Hakim, discussed with the President, Jalal Talabani, the means of settling the political crisis in Iraq.

Presidential statement received by AIN on Thursday cited "Hakim ensured Talabani's health condition and discussed the political issues in Iraq in addition to the means of settling the political crisis in Iraq making use of Talabani's affect on the political sides."

"Hakim was accompanied by a large delegation representing all the constituents of the Iraqi people, comprising the head of the Iraqi National Congress, Ahmed al-Chalabi, the Deputy of the Pope of the Catholic Church Shilmon Wardini, Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, the Secretary General of the Imam Qader Holy Shrine, the head of the Iraqi Scholars Assembly Khalid al-Mula, the head of the National Congress of the Faili Kurds and some political and religious key figures," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=18979:talabani-hakim-discuss-means-of-](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18979:talabani-hakim-discuss-means-of-)

[settling-political-crisis-&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18979:talabani-hakim-discuss-means-of-settling-political-crisis-&catid=41:2011-11-19-15-21-19)

- **Large Arab League delegation to visit Baghdad in October**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Araba League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi said on Wednesday that a large AL delegation will visit Baghdad next October to discuss the joint Arab action.

Speaking at a press conference held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo, al-Arabi said" Iraq chairs the Arab summit and we have consultations with Iraqi foreign minister on all Arab affairs".

"I will make for Peru then return to Cairo on October 5, five days before heading for Baghdad leading a large delegation to discuss the joint Arab action," the secretary general said.

"Iraq wants to make its chairmanship of the Arab summit effective for the joint Arab action," he added.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28n2w3mkbstormuka45tigqvnet%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150569&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28n2w3mkbstormuka45tigqvnet%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150569&l=1)

- **Barzani forms joint committee of the government and the Islamic Union to end Bahdinan problems**

Shafaq News / The President of Kurdistan Regional Government, Najervan Barzani decided on Thursday to form a joint committee of the government and a representative of the Islamic Union Party to solve the issues in Bahdinan area.

The presidency of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) said in a statement, in which "Shafaq News", received a copy of it, that "Barzani has visited on Wednesday evening, in Erbil, the Secretary-General of the of Kurdistan Islamic Union, Mohammed Faraj," stressing that "the main focus of the meeting was devoted to discuss and debate about the last steps reached by the government to solve Bahdinan area events and the files of these events under the resolutions of Kurdistan Parliament."

"it was decided to form a joint committee of government and a representative of the Islamic Union to solve all files quickly," adding that " the secretary general of Kurdistan Islamic Union announced the union's willingness to end all disagreements between the forces and

parties and the normalization of relations with all parties, considering that as the duty of the authority to initiate normalizing the issue."

The statement added that, "Barzani has expressed the willingness of the KRG to exert a positive role in order to normalize relations between the parties and the political forces and protect the unity of the Kurdish society ".

Bahdinan area which include Dohuk province and adjacent areas to Kurdistan Region has witnessed a few months ago, incidents of violence on the background of the attack on alcohol shops , clubs ,massage places, restaurants and tourist hotels and burning them, after rumors that one of the imams in Zakho, said that he is a follower to Kurdistan Islamic union and incited the worshipers to do so , as well as the attack of crowds on the headquarters of Kurdistan Islamic Union in the area and burning them.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3596-barzani-forms-joint-committee-of-the-government-and-the-islamic-union-to-end-bahdinan-problems-.html>

- **PM Maliki and Other Iraqi Leaders Meet With Talabani in Sulaimani**

ERBİL, Kurdistan Region -- Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived at the Sulaimani International Airport on Wednesday and was received by a number of senior officials from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

Azad Jundiyanı, the official PUK spokesperson told Rudaw, "Maliki was welcomed by Kosrat Rasul Ali, vice president of the Kurdistan Region, and a number of PUK and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) officials."

A delegation of senior members from Maliki's Islamic Dawa Party is accompanying him on the visit. They are expected to hold a joint meeting with the PUK.

"Actually, Maliki's visit is meant to welcome back Jalal Talabani, but at such meetings between politicians it is normal for political issues to be discussed," Jundiyanı said. "Therefore, discussion of Iraq's current situation is expected to take place at the meeting. Talabani will surely use this opportunity to at least talk about the political crisis in Iraq."

There are also rumors that the speaker of Iraqi Parliament, Osama al-Nujaifi, will join the two leaders in their discussions in Sulaimani province, but Jundiyanı said, "Up to this moment, there is no information about whether Nujaifi will come to Sulaimani or not."

KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani, accompanied by a group of senior members from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), visited Talabani in Sulaimani province on Tuesday to welcome him back after a stay of three months in Germany for medical treatment.

Meanwhile, Jundiyanı, dismissed rumors that PUK has been asked to facilitate a meeting between Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani Iraqi PM Maliki during his visit to Sulaimani province,

"This is not true and we have no initiatives of this sort," said Jundiyanı.

"We are in direct contact on a daily basis with our friends in the KDP to exchange views on various issues," he added. "The PUK political bureau cannot take such a decision unilaterally. If we had decided to

take such an initiative, it would be in coordination with our friends in the KDP."

Similar reports appeared in some Kurdish media outlets. "Talabani has discussed this issue via phone with Barzani. But Barzani has refused to meet with Maliki under the excuse that meetings with Maliki would be futile," wrote the Kurdish newspaper Hawlati.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5225.html>

## 2. IRAN

- **Police Intensify Security at French Embassy**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The Law Enforcement Police increased security layers and entanglements around the French embassy in Tehran, where students have congregated to condemn the publication of insulting cartoons by a French magazine directed at the holy prophet of Islam (PBUH).

Hundreds of angry Iranian students who have gathered in front of the French mission in Tehran since the early hours of Thursday morning trampled the US and

Israeli flags and chanted slogans "Death to the US", "Death to Britain", "Death to France" and "Death to Israel".

The protestors called for unity among Muslims and respect for the holy prophet of Islam (PBUH), and expressed disgust at the French government's anti-Islam policies.

The Iranian students also called on the French and US nations to show reaction to their officials' insults to the Muslims' prophet.

The blasphemous caricatures were published after an anti-Islam US-Israeli film drew condemnation from numerous countries including Afghanistan, Egypt, Libya, Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Iran, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Morocco, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc.

In Iran, millions of Iranians in Tehran and other cities across the country held nationwide rallies in protest against the recent desecration of Islam.

The Iranian protesters chanted "Death to the US" and "Death to Israel" slogans,

expressing disgust at the US and the Zionist regime's anti-Islam policies.

Earlier, Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei blamed the US and the Zionists for the sacrilege of Muslims' Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in a movie made by an American-Israeli man, and called on Washington to punish those behind the blasphemous act.

In a statement issued on Thursday, the Iranian supreme leader said the US and Zionists' hands can be seen behind the move, and said if Washington statesmen claim to be not involved in this sacrilege of Islam and Islamic values, they should punish those who have designed and orchestrated the move.



"The filthy hand of the enemies of Islam once again revealed its deep-rooted malice by insulting the Grand Prophet [Mohammad] (PBUH) and with an insane and deplorable measure showed the fury

of the evil Zionists at the daily-increasing radiance of Islam and Holy Qur'an in the present world.

"Behind this evil move lie the antagonistic policies of the Zionists and the US and other heads of the global arrogance, who in their vain delusions want to knock down the Islamic sanctities from their lofty position in the eyes of the young generations in the world of Islam and to extinguish their religious sentiments. Had they not backed the previous links in this evil chain, namely Salman Rushdie, the Danish cartoonist, and the US pastors who burned the Holy Qur'an and had they not made orders for [production of] tens of anti-Islam movies to companies affiliated to the Zionist capitalists, things would not have lead to this great and unforgivable sin today," said the Leader.

"The number one suspects in this crime are Zionism and the US. If the American politicians are honest that they had no role, then they must punish those who committed this heinous crime and their financial backers, who have wrenched the hearts of Muslim nations, in proportion to this great crime," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"Muslim brothers and sisters must know that this desperate move by the enemies in the wake of the Islamic Awakening is a sign of the grandeur and importance of this uprising and heralds its increasing growth," the Leader added.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106241268>

- **DM Downplays Enemies' Attempts to Isolate Iran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi played down enemies' attempts to isolate Tehran through sanctions and pressures, stressing that they will never be able to inflict any harm on the Iranian nation.



Vahidi said enemies of Iran were to harm the nation by imposing sanctions, threats of military operations and psychological warfare, and said all those attempts were

uselessly made to isolate the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He stressed that enemies would never be capable of causing any harm to the Iranian nation.

Washington and its Western allies accuse Iran 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.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed the West's demand as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

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 plants.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106241264>

- **Ahmadinejad to Clarify Iran's Position on Int'l Issues at UN Meeting**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced that he plans to clarify Iran's position on regional and international issues during the upcoming UN General Assembly meeting in New York next week.



Ahmadinejad said Wednesday that an extensive agenda has been drawn up for the United Nations General Assembly meeting.

Talking to reporters at the end of a cabinet meeting, President Ahmadinejad said he is to present Iran's stand on the important global problems and offer proposals for removing them.

This will be my last presence in the United Nations General Assembly as the Iranian president, noted Ahmadinejad.

As part of his plan, Iran's President said he is to hold bilateral meetings there.

Ahmadinejad will leave Tehran for New York at the head of a delegation in the next few days in a bid to attend a UN General Assembly meeting and hold talks with senior heads of state who will participate in the meeting.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106241260>

- **Iranian Top Diplomat Meets Assad in Damascus**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian top diplomat Ali Akbar Salehi held a meeting with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Damascus to confer on the latest developments in the region and the world, specially in Syria.

Iran's foreign minister arrived in Damascus Wednesday morning, after ending his visit to Cairo where he attended a tripartite meeting with his Turkish and Egyptian counterparts on the Syrian crisis.

Prior to the talks with Assad, Salehi also held a meeting with his Syrian counterpart Walid al-Muallem and discussed issues of mutual interest.



Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011 with organized attacks by

well-armed gangs against Syrian police forces and border guards being reported across the country.

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

The US and its western and regional allies have long sought to topple Assad and his ruling system. Media reports said that the Syrian rebels and terrorist groups have received significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, a crime paid for by the Persian Gulf Arab states and coordinated by the United States.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106241248>

- **Iran marks anniversary of Iraq imposed war with military parades**

Iran marks the 32nd anniversary of eight years of defense against Iraq's invasion of

the country under executed Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, Press TV reports.

The ceremony opening the 'Sacred Defense Week' started on Friday morning with a major military parade at the mausoleum of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in southern Tehran, our correspondent reported.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivered a speech at the ceremony in commemoration of the defense against the invasion.

“Our sacred defense was not defending a territory, a nation or a school of thought alone. It was well beyond that. It was defending human dignity, the rights of all nations and those of the oppressed people of the world,” President Ahmadinejad said.



He criticized the countries claiming to be advocates of human rights for supporting Saddam’s invasion of Iran and added their backing of the then Iraqi regime against Iran proved the arrogant powers’ false claims and their will to dominate the world.

Among high-ranking Iranian military officials present at the ceremony are Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Hassan Firouzabadi, Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi, Army Commander Major General Ataollah Salehi and Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad-Ali Ja'fari.

Iran's latest achievements in defense and military hardware will also be showcased during the Friday ceremony.

Saddam Hussein invaded Iran on September 22, 1980 in a war that dragged on for eight years.

The Sacred Defense Week commemorates the braveries of the Iranian soldiers who fought in the 1980-1988 Iraqi-imposed war and defended their country from enemy aggressions.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/21/262758/iran-marks-imposed-war-anniversary/>

- **Only 18% of Israelis back solo military strike on Iran: Poll**

Only 18 percent of Israelis are in favor of a possible Israeli strike against Iran without the support of the United States, a survey indicates.

The opinion poll, whose results were announced on Thursday, had questioned 600 Israelis as well as 1270 Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian Territories, Haaretz reported.



Sixty-five percent of Israeli respondents also said the Tel Aviv regime would not instigate military action against the Islamic Republic without US backing. The figure is up from 52 percent in June.

The survey also showed that almost five-in-six Palestinians and 77 percent of Israelis believe an Israeli strike against Iran would lead to a major conflict in the region.

The US, Israel and some of their allies have accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program with the Israeli regime repeatedly threatening to attack Iran's nuclear facilities based on the unsubstantiated allegation.

Iran rejects the allegations, arguing that as a committed signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

In addition, the IAEA has conducted numerous inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities but has never found any evidence showing that Iran's civilian nuclear program has been diverted to nuclear weapons production.

Unlike Iran, Israel, which is widely believed to possess between 200 to 400 nuclear

warheads, is a non-signatory to the NPT and continues to defy international calls to join the treaty.

Despite warnings by former and current Israeli security and intelligence officials, the Tel Aviv regime has recently stepped up its aggressive rhetoric against Iran.

Iranian officials have pledged to deliver a crushing response to any military strike against the country, warning that any such measure could result in a war that would spread beyond the Middle East.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/20/262718/only-18-of-israelis-back-strike-on-iran/>

- **Diplomacy still an option to resolve Iran nuclear issue: Rice**

US ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice says there is still room to resolve issues regarding Iran's nuclear energy program through diplomatic channels.

"We believe there is still time and space for diplomacy," Rice told a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting on Thursday.

She repeated Washington's allegations against Tehran, saying, "However, the onus is on Iran to respond constructively."



Rice also called for a "clear, united resolution" of the current standoff over Iran's nuclear energy program.

The remarks come as Iran is in close talks and cooperation with the P5+1 - permanent members of the UNSC plus Germany - and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in an attempt to allay the West's concerns over the country's nuclear energy program.

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

Iran refutes the allegation and argues that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-

Proliferation Treaty and a member of the IAEA, it is entitled to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/20/262662/diplomacy-still-open-on-iran-ncase/>

- **P5+1 must cooperate with Iran before talks get tough: Lawmaker**

Today, if they could reach an agreement with Iran at the negotiating table, they would have achieved agreement with a country which is capable of enriching uranium up to 20 percent. However, if they seek to procrastinate during negotiations, they will face more difficult conditions in future talks.”



Iranian lawmaker, Mansour Haqiqatpour

An Iranian lawmaker has called on the world powers to adopt a more

cooperative approach in talks over Iran's nuclear energy program, taking Tehran's nuclear achievements into consideration.

In a Tuesday interview, deputy head of Iran Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, Mansour Haqiqatpour, pointed to the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the world powers, noting, “The member states of P5+1 group - comprising permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - should recognize Iran's power.”

“Today, if they could reach an agreement with Iran at the negotiating table, they would have achieved agreement with a country which is capable of enriching uranium up to 20 percent. However, if they seek to procrastinate during negotiations, they will face more difficult conditions in future talks,” he pointed out.

Referring to military threats leveled against Iran by Israel and the US, the legislator said, “Iran favors negotiation and dialogue, but when needed, it will defend every bit of its sovereignty and will make the enemy, which may want to invade our soil, regret [that decision] at all levels.”

Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Jalili met with the P5+1 representative, Catherine Ashton, in the follow-up to their previous negotiations on Iran's nuclear energy program in the Turkish city of Istanbul late on Tuesday.

Ashton and Jalili last met in Moscow in June to discuss issues regarding Iran's nuclear energy program.

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 the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is entitled to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/20/262653/p51-must-cooperate-avoid-tough-talk/>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **PLO: 18 Palestinians killed in Damascus**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- At least 18 Palestinians were killed Thursday and their bodies displayed publicly in Damascus, PLO officials in the capital's largest refugee camp said.

The PLO office in Yarmouk said the Syrian regime "committed a massacre" against Palestinians in the camp. Bodies were found mutilated and charred, it said.

PLO secretary-general Yasser Abed Rabbo denounced the killings.

"We reject any justification or allegations invoked by the Syrian regime army about this massacre which includes torture, killing, and assassination," Abed Rabbo said.

"Moreover, such types of crimes need to be condemned internationally. Syria faces unprecedented massacres against Syrian people as well as Palestinians," he said.

Thursday's killings were the latest in a string of attacks targeting Palestinians. At

least 10 refugees were killed in the Yarmouk a day earlier, activists in the camp reported.

An activist in Yarmouk, where rebels have been hiding out in recent days, said tanks and soldiers had sealed all the entrances. Hundreds of soldiers were searching the area on foot and on trucks mounted with heavy machine guns.

"We are trapped here. Only children and older men or women can leave. Young men, who could be rebels or activists, and even young women, who could also be activists, are stuck inside," an activist called Abu Salam told Reuters on Skype.

"We are hiding in our homes. I am afraid to leave the house so I am sitting here waiting to see if they reach my street, if I will be arrested or shot dead," he said.

He said at least three people, two men and a young women, were shot dead when soldiers saw them running out of a park on Thursday morning. Another five rebels found hiding out in the area were executed, he said.

The campaign is the latest step in an effort by state forces to stamp out a presence in the Syrian capital of insurgents who are fighting to topple President Bashar Assad.

A resident who toured Yarmouk a day earlier said rebel fighters, who have been flushed out of many surrounding districts, had pulled into a southern section of the district and come under intense army bombardment overnight.

Activists and witnesses who spoke to Reuters say that many parts of the districts in Damascus's southern outskirts, where insurgents have been trying to maintain a foothold, have been reduced to rubble.

They said entire buildings had collapsed and the stench of decaying bodies filled the streets. "We are too afraid to go get them because security forces are there and will ask why we are coming for these people," said Abu Salam.

Yarmouk is an unofficial camp for Palestinian refugees. The densely populated, impoverished district in southern Damascus is packed with concrete buildings.

This summer, many districts of southern Damascus became a daily battleground in an 18-month-old popular revolt against Bashar Assad that has escalated into civil war.

Syrian state television said 100 people had been arrested in Yarmouk, and said its forces searching another nearby district were "raiding terrorists dens" and had killed several people inside them.

Assad's supporters say they are not facing homegrown opposition but rather militants funded from abroad.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=521887>

- **Israel says to allow some exports from Gaza**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- An Israeli official said Thursday that military authorities have approved the entry of 100 million shekels from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip to assist with a liquidity crisis, amid a host of measures to facilitate the entry and exit of goods at Gaza crossings.

The Gaza Strip is under an Israeli land and sea blockade, and its sole border crossing not controlled by Israel, Egypt's Rafah terminal, is not equipped for the passage of goods.

Khatib Mansour, director of the Israeli army's Coordination and Liaison Administration for Gaza, said regular meetings with Palestinian representatives in Gaza had enabled Israel to approve several new measures.

He said the improvements will continue as long as border violence with Gaza militants remains under control. Israeli military forces shelled Gaza on Friday, killing two men it accused of involvement in attacks against Israel.



But Mansour said Israeli authorities had carefully studied the situation in Gaza, and

on Sunday would allow the currency injection into the coastal strip.

He also said Israel will allow furniture and clothes to be exported from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank. In May, Israel permitted the first export of clothes from Gaza to a foreign country in five years, as a truck carrying 2,000 pieces of mainly woolen garments was transferred via Israel to Britain.

Israeli legal center Gisha says sale of goods from Gaza to the West Bank and Israel has been prohibited since 2007, when Israel tightened its restrictions on Gaza when Hamas took power in the coastal strip.

Israel's blockade destroyed Gaza's export-dependent economy. The World Bank says the private sector will not recover until access to its traditional markets in Israel and the West Bank is restored.

On Thursday, the World Food Programme said it was transporting 1.2 million fortified date bars produced in Gaza to its West Bank school meals initiative, the second batch of an export sent from Gaza in March. Then, the WFP delivery was the

first from Gaza to the West Bank in five years.

Mansour said Israel also approved materials for 16 road and school projects sponsored by international aid organizations in Gaza. Ten refrigerated trucks for transporting produce have also been cleared to enter Gaza, he continued.

After the next meeting between Palestinian and Israeli coordination bodies on Sunday, several products will be removed from a blacklist permitting their import to Gaza, Mansour added.

In recent reports ahead of a PA donor conference this month, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations have warned of a worsening economic crisis in both the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

"We should all be concerned about Gaza's future if there is no change to the current untenable situation," UN special envoy Robert Serry said on Thursday.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=522068>

- **Transport union to resume strike action**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- The transport workers union on Thursday said it would return to strike action, as it was not satisfied with measures taken by the Palestinian Authority to allay the strikes and protest rallies that rocked the West Bank in recent weeks.

Union director Nasser Younis told Ma'an that transport workers will strike on Monday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and all day Wednesday.



Younis said he decided to relaunch strikes after meeting with the PA transport ministry, as their demands had only been met in part.

The union is asking the government to limit the price of diesel to 5.5 shekels (\$1.4) per liter, to exempt transport workers from income tax, and lower VAT to seven percent.

Fayyad said last week that he would cancel most, but not all of the fuel price raises of around 5 percent implemented at the beginning of this month. He also pledged to roll back a recent 1 percent VAT increase by 0.5 percent, bringing the tax to 15 percent.

A day later, the transport union said it would suspend strike action following "constructive discussions" with the Palestinian Authority.

Younis said on Thursday that the union had secured government agreement on two demands: a 50 percent reduction in the cost of purchasing public transport vehicles, and a three-month amnesty for drivers who were illegally sold public vehicles and were then unable to register as owners.

A series of public transport strikes ground the West Bank to a halt several times in

September, amid wider demonstrations protesting the rising cost of living.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank both issued reports this week warning of serious risks to the Palestinian economy.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=522056>

- **EU, Social Affairs Ministry Honor Employees Excelled in Training Program**

JERUSALEM, September 20, 2012 (WAFA) - The European Union and the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Social Affairs honored its employees who excelled in a training program in social administration, strategic planning and delivery of social services, Thursday said an EU press release.

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad and EU Head of Operations Sergio Piccolo awarded the certificates to 88 trainees at a ceremony organized at Ramallah's Red Crescent Conference Centre. More than 100 of the Ministry's civil servants travelled from across the West Bank to take part in the celebration.

The ceremony was the culmination of a two year effort by EU and the Ministry of Social Affairs to develop an equitable, comprehensive and efficient social protection system in the occupied Palestinian Territory (oPT).

The release said that since April 2010, the Ministry, with the support of EU, has been working on improving its practices to meet international standards in the field of social protection. Specifically, the EU-funded program allowed for the development of a business strategy that helped deliver the priorities of PA's Social Protection Sector Strategy for 2011-2013. Moreover, it focused on strengthening the institutional and policy capacity of the Ministry through the comprehensive training of its staff.

Speaking at the ceremony, Piccolo said, "A national system of social protection which is fair and effective should be given in any modern, independent state. In the last years you have achieved a lot – not least by putting in place a national cash transfer program of social allowances which guarantees that the relief reaches those in

greatest need and covers both the West Bank and Gaza.'

'I would like to commend the Minister of Social Affairs, Majeda Al-Masri, and the entire Ministry's staff for your achievements to date, hard work and commitment," he added.

Piccolo said, 'For EU this has been a major investment and an exemplary program which we want to see advance even further. As you know, we have been working with the Ministry on two fronts; the institutional building efforts are coupled with regular financial contributions to the payment of social allowances as a means of helping PA meet its recurring expenditure, whilst it moves ahead with structural and policy reforms.'

For the last four years EU has taken the lead in the social protection sector in oPT in an effort to reduce poverty and improve social inclusion. Since 2008, the EU and other donors – through the use of the EU financial mechanism PEGASE - have contributed over € 172 million to the payment of social allowances to eligible households living under extreme poverty in the West Bank and Gaza.

EU has plans to continue its technical support to the Ministry of Social Affairs for the coming three years to further promote good practice in policy formulation and allow the Palestinian Authority realize in full its Social Protection Sector strategy.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20715>

- **Rights Group Holds Israel Responsible for Striking Prisoners' Lives**

GAZA, September 20, 2012 (WAFA) - The Gaza-based al-Mezan Center for Human Rights expressed its concern for the detainees' health and lives, particularly the two striking Palestinian prisoners held in administrative detention, Samer al-Barq and Hassan Safadi, and held the Israeli authorities responsible for their well-being, according to a press release on Thursday.

Samer al-Barq has been on hunger strike for 119 days and Hassan Safadi for 89 days, protesting their administrative detention without charge or trial.

Al Mezan strongly condemned Israel's gross abuses of Palestinian detainees,

starting with the Unlawful Combatant Law, the policy of administrative detention, and other procedures that violate detainees' rights, including solitary confinement, medical negligence, barring of family visitation, and other practices.

It demanded the international community, especially the signatory parties to the Geneva Conventions, to put pressure on the occupation state and force it to respect its obligations under international law, and to treat detainees humanely in keeping with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners issued in 1955, and other relevant international standards.

There must also be steps taken towards guarantee of the release of all Palestinian prisoners, especially those thrown in prison without charge or fair trial, including appeal to all means of defense, said the release.

Al Mezan called on civil society groups, national and international human rights organizations to express their solidarity with Palestinian detainees, to expose Israel's violations of international

humanitarian law, and to oblige Israel to uphold its legal responsibilities.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20711>

- **Ross, Dershowitz confident Obama has Israel's back on Iran**

WASHINGTON – Dennis Ross and Alan Dershowitz, high-profile supporters of both Israel and US President Barack Obama, told The Jerusalem Post Thursday they were confident the president would support Israel should it attack Iran in a last-ditch effort to stop a nuclear bomb, and that Obama would attack Iran himself if necessary.

They also took issue with Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney's recently uncovered statements at a closed-door fund-raiser in May about the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, where he said he doesn't see much potential for a two-state solution.

"You hope for some degree of stability, but you recognize that this is going to remain an unsolved problem," Romney said, pointing to a lack of desire for peace on the part of Palestinians and the

security risks Israel would have to take in any two-state deal.

“If you create an impression that everything’s hopeless, you’re going to find you’re not going to be able to sustain stability,” Ross, who served as an adviser to Obama and several previous administrations on the peace process, said in a telephone interview with the Post.

“Frustration is going to build.”

“We need a president who tries even harder in light of the difficulties to bring about a peace process,” said Harvard Law School professor Alan Dershowitz, also speaking to the Post by phone. “The main beneficiary of a two-state solution would be Israel.”

Dershowitz agreed with Romney that many Palestinians didn’t want peace and that Israel could face security problems – but he contended that other Palestinians, including some of their leaders, did want peace, and that Israel’s security would have to be an essential part of a future deal.

The controversy over Romney’s remarks, which were caught on video and widely distributed this week, came on the heels of fresh tensions between Obama and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu over how to handle Iran’s drive for nuclear capability.

Dershowitz, who has in the past criticized elements of Obama’s policies in the Middle East, said the public exchange of differences between the two allies that included Obama not giving Netanyahu a meeting while he is in the US next week had been “mishandled.” But he was encouraged by the hour-long conversation between Obama and Netanyahu last week to smooth over the dust-up.

Ross acknowledged that “there are some differences now” between the US and Israel, but he added that a “genuine effort is being made to manage those.” He also said that if Israel felt it faced an existential threat and had to use force to stop Iran, the US would support it doing so.

“The US as its one true ally in the world needs to be there and will be there. I have no doubt of that, regardless of who’s president,” Ross said.

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Similarly, he said he was sure that if Obama felt all diplomatic options had been exhausted and Iran was getting close to having a nuclear bomb, “He’ll act.”

Dershowitz echoed that, based on his own conversations with Obama. He said that while “the administration can do and say a little more” so that Iran understood it won’t be allowed to acquire a nuclear weapon, he trusted that Obama would take military action if it became necessary.

And Dershowitz stressed that he was “absolutely” certain the US would support Israel if, as a last resort, it undertook an attack on its own.

Despite some of his criticisms in the past, Dershowitz said as of now, he planned to vote for Obama in November.

<http://www.jpost.com/USPresidentialrace/Article.aspx?id=285780>

- **PMO: PA's UN statehood bid violates Oslo process**

The Prime Minister’s Office warned Thursday that a Palestinian unilateral statehood bid at the UN, along with attempts to set the territorial boundaries of the conflict through a General Assembly resolution, would be a “mistake” and “a blow to the peace process.”

“We hope this does not happen,” said Mark Regev, spokesman for Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

“The Palestinians committed themselves to resolving all outstanding issues in negotiations, and such a unilateral action would be viewed as a violation.”

Regev’s words came in response to Palestinian Authority chief negotiator Saeb Erekat’s statement that the PA plans to ask the UN to set territorial terms for a negotiated two-state solution along the pre-1967 lines with east Jerusalem as its capital.

Erekat spoke with reporters in his Jericho office, in advance of PA President Mahmoud Abbas’s speech on September 27 at the opening session of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly, which began this week in New York.

The Palestinians plan to ask the UN's 193 nations to upgrade their status from observer to non-member state – a move that increases their rights before the international body. He did not set a date for submission of the resolution.

The PA, Erekat said, hopes to garner the support of 150 to 170 UN nations for their proposal.

Among those who spoke out this week against Palestinian unilateral steps at the UN was its Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

At a Wednesday press conference in New York, Ban said he supported the Palestinian right to statehood, but urged them to achieve it through a negotiated settlement.

“The aspiration of the Palestinian people to join the United Nations has been a long aspiration, and it has been long overdue,” he said.

“At the same time, I believe that all these processes should come out as a result of a negotiated settlement of the Middle East

peace process, particularly the two-state formula, where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in peace and security.”

Erekat said that given Israel's insistence on clinging to the status quo, the Palestinians had no choice but to pursue this path.

“The national interest of Palestinians leaves us with no choice but to take Palestine to the UN as a non-member state,” Erekat said. He argued that such a move would help rekindle the peace process, which has largely been at a standstill for over three years.

The Palestinians have refused to hold direct talks with Israel until it freezes West Bank settlements and Jewish building in east Jerusalem. Israel has refused to cede to that demand and has insisted that direct talks be held without preconditions.

Regev said it was “the ultimate in disingenuous behavior” for the PA to go to the UN with a unilateral statehood bid, claiming it was a necessary step because the peace process was not moving, when “they are responsible for the fact that the

process has not moved ahead more energetically.”

Passage of a General Assembly resolution establishing Palestine as a non-member state could be considered a de facto recognition of statehood. It cannot be vetoed. Only the 15 member states on the UN Security Council can grant membership rights and full nation status.

In the past the US has pledged to veto the Palestinians’ bid for unilateral statehood at the Security Council. The issue became moot last year when the Palestinians failed to gain the necessary support for that statehood bid from nine of the 15 Security Council members.

Erekat on Thursday said that the Palestinian membership bid still stands before the Security Council, but at present they still lack those nine votes.

“Recognition of the state of Palestine does not require the UN. It is the sovereign decision of nations [based on] their sovereign discretion,” Erekat said.

Still, the Palestinians plan to use the forum of the General Assembly to shore

up both international recognition of statehood and world support for a two-state solution along pre- 1967 lines, Erekat said.



“The occupied territories are not disputed territories,” he said.

There is wide consensus among the nations of the world that the border of both states is at the pre-1967 lines, Erekat said.

“When the Palestinians gain recognition as a non-member state, Israel can not argue that these are disputed territories,” he said. Once Abbas delivers his address, the Palestinians plan to begin geopolitical discussions with UN nations to solicit support for their resolution for nonmember state status, Erekat said.

“We want Palestine back on the map with the '67 line and east Jerusalem as its capital,” Erekat said.

Already on Thursday morning, Erekat said, he had met with EU representatives in the region on this issue.

He added that he hoped as many EU countries as possible would support them, as well as the US and even Israel.

“This step aims to preserve the two-state solution,” he said. “I do not see why people who stand for the two-state solution should fight us,” Erekat said.

He rejected any attempts to characterize their efforts at the UN as unilateral steps.

“We never said our right to self-determination is subject to negotiation,” he said. When it comes to a two-state solution, he said, the PA is focusing its efforts on the UN, as the first and best step.

Once Palestine is recognized as a non-member state, he said, the rest of the process will fall into place and “the terms

of reference for the negotiations will change.”

Once there is global acceptance through the UN General Assembly of a two-state solution along the pre-1967 lines, negotiations with Israel can center on staged steps for withdrawal, Erekat said.

“The PA was born out of a contract between the PLO and Israel to deliver Palestinians from occupation to independence. It can not have any other role.”

Also on Jericho on Thursday, Erekat spoke out about comments US Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney made on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a recently leaked video.

Romney “is exporting fear and doom and gloom,” with his comments that the Palestinians are not interested in peace,” he said. “A presidential candidate must export hope... Those who believe in democracy and peace must redouble their efforts.”

When leaders export fear, Erekat said, “they are announcing that the extremists are victorious.

No one stands for peace more than the Palestinians,” he said. “No one will lose more from the absence of peace than the Palestinians.”

<http://www.ipost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=285712>

#### 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Heirs to glorious pasts, Turkey and Egypt seek wider role with each other’s help**

Egyptian Presidency, File/Associated Press - FILE - In Monday, Sept. 17, 2012 file photo released by the Egyptian President, Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, right, meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu at the Presidential Palace in Cairo, Egypt. The question of who speaks for the Middle East, which is chronically prone to turmoil, has no easy answer. There is a sectarian rift, a divide over tradition and modernity, and a divide over secularism and religion. Amid this cacophony, Turkey and Egypt, both with claims to regional leadership, are seeking

a closer partnership even though their visions and circumstances differ starkly.

CAIRO — The image of an Ottoman sultan glowered at the gridlock from a highway billboard in the Egyptian capital, hands clasped, his feathered headgear and gold-hewn epaulettes in elegant contrast to the grind of traffic below. The poster for a Turkish-made movie about the 1453 fall of Constantinople recalled the early feats of an empire that eventually ruled the Middle East and beyond.

Egypt, like Turkey, has its own grand history — evident in the pyramids and other monuments that its ancients left behind, and in a national pride that’s distinctive in the Arab world.

The descendants of yesterday’s sultans and pharaohs, so to speak, also have ambitions of an outsized role for their respective countries. Each wants to speak for the Middle East.

But they can’t go it alone so Turkey and Egypt now talk of working together. In some ways, it’s an odd couple.

Turkey is relatively stable and prosperous, though its foreign outreach has soured in some quarters, forcing it to tone down ambitions to become a statesman above the Mideast fray.



Egypt, the most populous Arab country, is struggling with problems at home. Analysts believe it will be at least several years before Cairo can play a robust role in a region that rolls from one crisis to the next, divided over everything from religion to modernity.

Their alliance could work if Egypt follows Turkey's moderate creed of reform and pragmatism, along with Western ties and Islamic piety. Then again, once Egypt gains more confidence, the two nations might jostle for influence.

Turkey's outreach (in this case, deep pockets) was on show Monday in Cairo.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said his government would give \$2 billion in aid to Egypt to "increase trust" in its economy, beset by a drop in productivity, a tourism slump, strikes and protests since the fall of authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak in an uprising last year.

"The Egyptian territory is a fertile land where great civilizations were formed. We will witness Egypt's rise in the future," Davutoglu said. "With Egypt and the participation of other states, we will build a new Middle East."

The two nations both want President Bashar Assad of Syria to quit and Iran, his ally, to stay out of the civil war there.

In the Middle East, though, diplomacy and compromise seem in perpetual peril.

Israel ponders a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, fearing its enemy wants to build a bomb. Syria's civil war resembles a proxy conflict with a sectarian edge. Violence surrounding a film that insults Prophet Muhammad and was produced in the United States points to old tensions between Western and Islamic thought.

Turkey, a NATO member with a mostly Muslim (but not Arab) population, has been touted as a democratic model for a region swept by popular revolts.

But rough-and-tumble foreign relations have removed some of the shine. Turkey split with former ally Israel and sparred with traditional rival Iran. It doesn't get along well with the Shiite-led government in Iraq, sheltering its Sunni vice president even after a Baghdad court sentenced him to death for running death squads.

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/heirs-to-glorious-pasts-turkey-and-egypt-seek-wider-role-with-each-others-help/2012/09/21/d7bf869e-03b6-11e2-9132-f2750cd65f97\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/heirs-to-glorious-pasts-turkey-and-egypt-seek-wider-role-with-each-others-help/2012/09/21/d7bf869e-03b6-11e2-9132-f2750cd65f97_story.html)

- **Tunisia bans Friday demos for fear of violence over cartoons**

Tunisia said it was banning all demonstrations on Friday after receiving a tip-off about preparations for violence over cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published by a French satirical weekly.

"The interior ministry, using its powers under the state of emergency and in order

to maintain public order, announces that it is outlawing any form of demonstration anywhere in Tunisian territory on Friday," a ministry statement said on Thursday.

"The ministry notes that it has received information suggesting the protests would be exploited for the purpose of committing acts of violence and causing unrest," it added.

Calls for Friday protests were circulating on social networks following the publication by French weekly Charlie Hebdo on Wednesday of cartoons featuring obscene images of the founder of Islam.

The interior ministry called on "all Tunisians and civil society to demonstrate understanding" and "urge (people) not to follow the call" to protest.

The French embassy has announced it will close on Friday and said all French schools in Tunisia would remain shut from Wednesday until Monday morning, as a precautionary measure.

Tunisia's ruling Islamist party responded to the printing of the controversial images

by saying Muslims had "the right to protest" against them, as long as they do so peacefully.

"Ennahda backs the right of Muslims to protest and calls on the use of peaceful and civilised means," said Ennahda, which heads Tunisia's governing coalition, while also branding the cartoons "a new attack against the Prophet."

Publication of the cartoons comes against a background of violent protests across the Muslim world, which first erupted early last week over an anti-Islam film made in California and posted on the Internet.

Four people were killed and dozens wounded on Friday during a demonstration by hardline Salafists outside the US embassy in Tunis, with protesters hurling petrol bombs and storming the mission, while police fired live rounds and tear gas.

The security forces have been sharply criticised for their handling of last week's deadly unrest, which saw police overwhelmed by protesters for long periods, despite ample warning and

attempts to boost security around the US mission.

Interior Minister Ali Larayedh has recognised that the security forces "stumbled," but insisted they had averted a "catastrophe" and has rejected numerous calls for his resignation over the issue.

In recent weeks, Tunisia has seen a spate of disturbances by Islamist hardliners of the Salafist movement that have escalated in the face of the US-produced movie "Innocence of Muslims."

Tunisia's Islamist-led government is regularly accused by the opposition and NGOs of not doing enough to rein in the extremists.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/53434/World/Region/Tunisia-bans-Friday-demos-for-fear-of-violence-ove.aspx>

- **Egypt authorities to review sale of 185 privatised firms**

Attorney will head new investigations into exactly how companies were sold to the private sector during the Mubarak era



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Egypt's Cabinet has formed a committee to review the sale of 185 publicly-owned companies during the reign of ex-president Hosni Mubarak, the state-owned Al-Ahram newspaper reported on Thursday.

The General Attorney of Public Funds Ali El-Hawary is heading the investigations which will look into the different procedures by which Egyptian state firms were transferred to the private sector.

In the wake of the early 2011 uprising, Egypt has seen heightened debate over the status of formerly publicly-owned companies. Five were reordered renationalised last year, with a court set to hear appeals against the moves in October.

Last Thursday an Egyptian court also ruled that the privatisation of Assiut Cement be

cancelled and the firm returned to state ownership.

Assiut Cement was 95.8 per cent owned by CEMEX, a global building materials firm, since its privatisation in 1999.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/53393/Business/Economy/Egypt-authorities-to-review-sale-of--privatised-fi.aspx>

- **Morocco says inflation drops to 1 pct in August**

Morocco's consumer price inflation eased to an annual 1 percent in August from 1.7 per cent in July, the country's planning authority said on Thursday.

Food prices rose by an annual 1.5 per cent by end-August while they were up 3.1 per cent in July, the High Planning authority said.

Month on month, overall consumer price inflation was 0.7 per cent after a 1.4 per cent rise in food prices between July and August.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/53395/Business/Economy/Morocco>

[-says-inflation-drops-to--pct-in-  
August.aspx](#)

- **Relations sour between Wafd and Moussa over Egypt's new party**

Former presidential candidate and the Wafd set to meet Thursday to discuss disagreement over Moussa's leadership of new Egyptian Conference Party

An altercation began, Thursday, between former presidential candidate Amr Moussa and the Liberal Wafd Party, after Moussa failed to discuss his role as head of the newly-established Egyptian Conference Party (ECP) with the political party.

Moussa, who came fifth in the presidential elections, is already honorary president of the Wafd Party, a title he was granted in May of this year. Relations, consequently, soured on Monday when Moussa launched the ECP, a coalition of 25 political parties and movements that does not include the Wafd.

According to Egyptian daily Al-Shorouk, the Wafd is set to hold a meeting late Thursday with Moussa to discuss its

disagreement over Moussa's leadership of the ECP, which the Wafd is not a part of.

The ECP includes the Democratic Front Party, Ghad El-Thawra party, the Egyptian Arabic Socialist Party, the El-Geel Democratic Party, the Social Peace Party, the Reform and Building Party, the Sufi Egyptian, the Tahrir Party, Masr El-Fatah, the Egyptian Arabic Union, the Revolution's Guards, the Thawra Party, Arab for Justice and Equality, the Social Justice Party, Al-Tali'a Al-Arabiya Party, Al-Wai'e Party, the Revolution Youth Union, Amr Moussa's presidential campaign team, El-Khodr Party and Al-Mustikloon Al-Goded.

It also contains a large number of offshoots of Hosni Mubarak's now-defunct National Democratic Party, such as the Conservatives Party, the Freedom Party and the Egyptian Citizen Party.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/53360/Egypt/Politics-/Relations-sour-between-Wafd-and-Moussa-over-Egypt.aspx>

- **Tunisia Islamist chief vows crackdown on hardline Salafists**

The veteran leader of Tunisia's ruling Islamist party told AFP that the authorities would crack down on hardline Salafists after deadly violence around the US embassy, saying they pose a threat to the country's freedoms and security.

"Each time that parties or groups overstep our freedoms in a flagrant manner, we have to be tough, clamp down and insist on public order," Ennahda chief Rached Ghannouchi told AFP in an interview.

"These people pose a threat not only to Ennahda but to the country's freedoms and security."

Ghannouchi denied that the Ennahda-led coalition government had been lax in its failure so far to arrest Salafist leader Seif Allah Ibn Hussein, suspected of organizing the violent protest on Friday of last week at the US embassy and adjacent American school in Tunis.

Now slain Al-Qaeda leader Osama "bin Laden remained at liberty for years without the world's intelligence agencies capturing him, so it's not surprising that someone can go into hiding," he said.

"But the police will hunt him down until he has been arrested."

The Ennahda-led government has come in for strong criticism in the Tunisian press for failing to arrest Ibn Hussein, also known as Abu Iyadh, when he delivered the sermon at a Tunis mosque earlier week.

Ibn Hussein, who heads the extremist Ansar al-Sharia movement, preached at the Al-Fatah mosque in the heart of the capital on Monday surrounded by his followers, and then left, despite a heavy security deployment around the building.

During his sermon, he accused the police of provoking the protesters who attacked the US embassy, and called for the resignation of Interior Minister Ali Latayedh, an Ennahda member.

As fears mounted of fresh violence after the mainly weekly Muslim prayers this Friday, Ghannouchi said that from now on the security forces would deal firmly with any breaches of public order.

"The police have learnt the lesson and I don't think there's going to be any repetition [this Friday]," he said.

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

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

### • Gemayel heads to Rome

Kataeb Party leader Amin Gemayel on Friday left for Rome to participate in the annual conference held by the Confederation of Democratic and Moderate Parties, the National News Agency reported.

Gemayel will also hold talks with Italian officials, the report added.

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

### • Army seizes most of ransom paid to release kidnapped citizen

The security forces raided the house of a suspect involved in kidnapping Lebanese citizen Youssef Bechara, whose family paid a \$400,000 ransom to release him, the

National News Agency reported on Friday morning.

The security forces did not find anyone in the house, but managed to confiscate \$380,000. The suspect remains a fugitive.

However, the security forces arrested another suspect involved in the kidnapping in the Beirut area of Shiyah.

Bechara was abducted on Monday and was released on Tuesday after the family paid the ransom for him.

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

### • Soueid: Suleiman's proposal on defense strategy 'unconstitutional'

March 14 General Secretariat Coordinator Fares Soueid said in remarks published Friday that the defense strategy proposed by President Michel Suleiman during the last national dialogue session was unconstitutional.

"When it comes to the national defense strategy, the only reference should be the constitution [and] the Taif Accord; however, the preliminary discussions on

the strategy proposed by Suleiman completely contradict the constitution because it acknowledges an institution that does not exist in the constitution, which is the resistance,” Soueid told An-Nahar newspaper.

Soueid also said that liberating the Shebaa farms must start with demarcating the border with Syria and the latter’s acknowledgement that the lands are Lebanese.

On Thursday, the national dialogue session held at the Baabda Presidential Palace discussed Suleiman’s proposal on the national defense strategy.

Suleiman’s strategy calls for committing to the 1949 Armistice Agreement with Israel, taking all necessary measures to liberate all the occupied Lebanese lands and compel Israel to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701. It is also based on reinforcing Lebanon’s international role and strengthening its ties with countries in the region and beyond.

Suleiman’s proposal on the defense strategy also states that until the army’s capabilities are reinforced, a consensus

must be reached on the appropriate frameworks and mechanisms to use Hezbollah’s arsenal and putting it at the army’s disposal.

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

- **Lebanon’s defense minister welcomes cabinet plan to support army**

Lebanese Defense Minister Fayez Ghosn on Thursday expressed his satisfaction with a plan to arm Lebanon’s military institution that was approved by the cabinet on Wednesday.

During an interview with New TV, Ghosn labeled the proposal as “a journey of a thousand miles, because for the first time there is clear plan to” support the Lebanese army with military hardware.

The cabinet on Wednesday agreed on a draft law that permits the government to use a 2.4 billion LL credit line to purchase hardware and other gear for the army, according to a statement issued by the general secretariat of the councils of ministers.

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

## 6. SYRIA

- **Syria “air strike” kills 30 civilians as fighting rages**

At least 30 civilians were reported killed on Thursday in a massive explosion in northeast Syria as state media blamed a helicopter gunship crash on an accident but monitors said rebels shot it down.

Dozens of people were wounded in the blast at a petrol station in the northeastern village of Ain Issa, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Activists said it was caused by an air strike.

"At least 30 people were killed and 83 were injured, although unconfirmed sources say the number of dead was actually more than 50," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

"Lawyers and activists in the area say the blast was caused by aerial bombardment," the Britain-based watchdog added.

Activists said the petrol station, in Raqa province, was hit by a warplane.

"The petrol station is the only one that is still open to customers in the area, and it was packed," a media activist who identified himself as Abu Muawiya told AFP via Skype. "It was hit by a fighter jet.

"The only reason why it would strike the petrol station with a jet is to kill the highest number of people possible," he charged. It was impossible to verify the claim.

The deaths came a day after Syrian rebels seized the Tal al-Abyad border crossing between Raqa province and Turkey in heavy clashes with regime troops.

The blast at Ain Issa was some 40 kilometers south of the border post.

The rebel Free Syrian Army battled (FSA) government troops in Raqa city, the Observatory said, adding: "Initial reports indicate that several troops were killed or injured."

The military helicopter that went down outside Damascus crashed after an accident with a civilian aircraft, state television said.

"This morning's helicopter crash resulted from an accident in the air when the helicopter's rotor clipped the tail of a Syrian Air plane carrying 200 passengers," it said, citing air traffic controllers at Damascus airport and Syrian Air as saying the airliner landed safely.

The Observatory reported the helicopter was downed by rebels following a series of explosions in the restive town of Douma, northeast of Damascus.

Clashes raged on Thursday as the Observatory, which relies on the accounts of activists on the ground, said the death toll in the 18-month uprising had surpassed 29,000 people, the vast majority civilians.

Fierce clashes raged in rebel-held Talbiseh and Rastan in the central province of Homs, it said.

Amateur videos posted on YouTube by Talbiseh-based activists showed civilians—including children—wounded in the shelling.

In eastern Aleppo a doctor said at least 12 civilians were killed, including children, while shops in the Old City remained closed.

A rebel commander named as Abdel Basset al-Ahmadi was also killed in fighting on Thursday, the Observatory said.

It said at least 154 people were killed nationwide on Thursday, including the 30 in Raqa.

On the political front, diplomats from more than 60 nations and the Arab League meeting in the Netherlands urged the UN Security Council to choke off the resources Assad's regime needs to battle the uprising.

The "Friends of Syria" working group on sanctions called on the world and "particularly members of the UN Security Council" to implement measures to deny Damascus access to resources "for its campaign against its own people."

The group, which previously met in Tunis, Istanbul and Paris, plans to gather again in Morocco in October and later in Italy.

The international community has struggled to find common ground on ways to halt the bloodshed, with Russia and China vetoing three UN Security Council resolutions condemning or threatening sanctions against the Assad regime.

Assad on Thursday slammed Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar for arming the rebels.

"The widespread idea that Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt are the cornerstone of stability in the region is false. It has always been, and will remain, Syria, Iraq and Egypt," he told Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram al-Arabi, which put excerpts from his interview on its website on Thursday.

He said Qatar provides "weapons and money to terrorists to repeat the scenario of Libya," where Moammar Qaddafi's regime was toppled in a bloody revolt last year.

Assad also criticized Turkey, a former close ally, saying Ankara was unconcerned "about the interests of its people, focusing solely on its ambitions that include 'the new Ottoman empire'."

Overnight, UN chief Ban Ki-moon warned that the Syrian government and rebels seemed intent on fighting to the bitter end and said the conflict would top the agenda at next week's UN General Assembly meeting.

Ban said UN-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who just wrapped up his first visit to Syria and its neighbors since taking up his post earlier this month, may put a plan to Assad's government after the UN talks.

Helicopter gunships pounded the Al-Hajar al-Aswad district of the capital, as the exiled opposition said a large swathe of south Damascus had been turned into a disaster area by the heavy fighting.

"Helicopter gunships are pounding civilian homes in Al-Hajar al-Aswad in south Damascus," the Syrian National Council said, adding: "Many people have been killed or injured."

The SNC also renewed its call on the international community to intervene, saying its "response to what is happening in the world's oldest capital city [of Damascus] has been completely insufficient."

On Wednesday, the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC), a grassroots network of anti-regime activists, also spoke of disastrous conditions in south Damascus and pleaded for help from international aid organizations.

The UN's World Food Program appealed for greater access to the "hotspot areas" of Syria, saying it was not able to assess aid needs there.

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

- **Syrian regime troops clash with rebels near Aleppo military bases, activists say**

Syrian troops backed by helicopter gunships clashed with rebels near an army barracks in Aleppo as pre-dawn battles broke out near a military airport elsewhere in the province on Friday, a monitor said.

Fighting erupted overnight near the Hanano barracks in the Arkoub district of northeast Aleppo, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Two weeks ago, rebels stormed the Hanano base—perched on a hill and near the regime-controlled citadel that dominates the city—but were outgunned by the army and pushed out after three days of fierce battles.

Several districts of the northern metropolis, including Sakhur in the northeast and Bustan al-Qasr in the center, came under overnight attack, the Britain-based watchdog said.

Elsewhere in the northern province, fighting broke out between troops and rebels near the Meng military airport, the watchdog said.

Military airports have been a key target for the rebels as the army has increasingly deployed warplanes and helicopter gunships to launch devastating strikes against them.

Northwest of the capital Damascus, the Observatory reported a massive explosion, believed to be a car bomb. Heavy gunfire was heard afterwards but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

In the central province of Homs, a civilian was killed in dawn shelling of Rastan, while the eastern city of Deir Ezzor and the town of Daal in the southern province of Daraa also came under bombardment.

On Thursday, at least 225 people -- 140 civilians, 39 rebels and 46 government troops -- were killed nationwide, according to the Observatory.

The dead included 25 civilians killed in Aleppo.

And at least 30 civilians were reported killed on Thursday in a massive explosion at a petrol station in the northeastern province of Raqa.

Activists said the petrol station, in the village of Ain Issa, was hit by a warplane.

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

- **Assad slams Turkey, Saudi, Qatar over rebels**

President Bashar al-Assad has hit out at Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, accusing them of arming Syrian rebels but insisting they will not win, according to excerpts

from an interview to appear in an Egyptian newspaper on Friday.

"They suddenly saw money in their hands after a long period of poverty and think they can buy history and play a regional role," Assad told Al-Ahram al-Arabi, which put excerpts from the interview on its website on Thursday.

"The widespread idea that Saudi Arabia, Syria and Egypt are the cornerstone of stability in the region is false. It has always been, and will remain, Syria, Iraq and Egypt," said Assad whose country is in the throes of a brutal civil war.

He said that before the conflict, Riyadh served only as a "mediator with the West that does not appreciate the axis of resistance against Zionism advocated by Syria."

The "axis of resistance" is a term used to refer to Syria, Iran and the Islamist Hezbollah movement in Lebanon against Israel.

Assad said Qatar "uses the power of money and revolves in the orbit of the West by providing weapons and money to

terrorists to repeat the scenario of Libya," where Moammar Qaddafi's regime was toppled in a bloody revolt last year.

"The Qataris were the quickest to fuel the violence," he said.

Assad also criticized Turkey, a former close ally turned bitter foe that has called repeatedly for him to step down.

Ankara was unconcerned "about the interests of its people, focusing solely on its ambitions that include 'the new Ottoman empire'," he said.

Assad reiterated that "armed men" were "using terrorism against the Syrian state," but that they "have no support among the people. Ultimately they will not emerge victorious."

Syrian officials refer to the rebels battling the regime as "terrorists."

"It will take time" for regime forces to win, he said, adding that the "door to dialogue is open—only talks with the opposition will solve the crisis."

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

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

### • Muslim Brotherhood admits to forming military arm in UAE

Prosecution charges detainees with forming organization that does harm to state security, in addition to having contacts with foreign communities.

ABU DHABI - Islamists detained in the United Arab Emirates have confessed to forming a secret organization that includes a military wing aimed at establishing an Islamist state, a newspaper reported.

Members of the banned Al-Islah, or Reform, association, said they planned to topple the UAE regime, Alkhaleej daily said, citing unnamed sources close to the investigation.

Al-Islah has traditionally been associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.

Those who made the reported confession are among 60 detained Islamists, including

Sheikh Sultan bin Kayed Al-Qassimi, a member of the ruling family of the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah.

"Investigations have revealed that the structure of the organization included committees and local branches in every emirate, as well as consultative and executive councils and a military wing," said Alkhaleej.

The group admitted a plot aimed at "seizing power and establishing a religious state or a Caliphate" -- the political system improvised by early Muslims after the death of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the 7th century.

The organization had also been acting "in high-level coordination with the organizations of the Muslim Brotherhood in three other Gulf states," said the report.

"The Muslim Brotherhood in the UAE recently received 10 million dirhams (\$2.72 million) from its counterparts in the Gulf, because it is currently going through a tough time," it added.

Other UAE newspapers reported matching statements also attributed to sources close to the investigation.

The Muslim Brotherhood activists are being tried based on the Article No.180 of the Penal Code which bans establishing clandestine organizations, official sources revealed.

The sources categorically denied claims that the detainees have been tortured, asserting that the allegation is pure fabrication.



The sources stressed that torture is not in tune with values of the Emirates; nor does it conform to the qualities of the country's Rulers.

The prosecution charged the detainees with forming an organization that does harm to the state security and the

principles on which the state is based on, in addition to having contacts with foreign communities, in a bid to doing harm to the political leadership.

Interrogations have revealed that the leadership structure of that organization includes committees and secondary offices in each emirate, in addition to a Shura council, an executive office and a military wing.

The sources affirmed that the technique of the organization relies on hitting the legitimacy of the country, spreading fabricated stories about corruption allegations, and degrading the prosperous living conditions in which people live in the UAE as fake and illusive.

The sources also denied a rumour that the accused are not able to hire a lawyer and pointed out that there are eight lawyers defending them.

They estimated the number of people who joined the organization or those affected by it at hundreds and less than 1,000, underlining the neutral and fair legal procedures taken by the UAE in dealing with this case, considering that the

UAE is a state of justice, constitution, law and institutions and that the proceedings would be announced transparently where those involved will be justly treated.

Article 180 of the Penal Code reads: “Whoever establishes, founds, organises, or administers an association, corporation, organization or any branch thereof, with the aim of overthrowing the regime of the State, or publicising it where the use of force is noticeable, shall be punished by temporary imprisonment.

“Whoever joins an association, corporation, organization or branch thereof, or whoever knowingly participates in any of them, shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years. Whoever receives or obtains funds of any kind from a person or body abroad, whether directly or through an intermediary, shall be punished by detention or by a fine or by either one of these two penalties, if the purpose of this is to publicise any of the things provided for in this Article.”

On July 15, the UAE announced it had dismantled a group it said was plotting against state security and challenging the

constitution but did not identify their affiliation or give the number of arrests.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54474>

- **Bahrain accepts UN human rights recommendations**

Kingdom accedes to calls for fair trials and religious protection

Geneva: The kingdom of Bahrain has pledged to improve its treatment of political activists, crack down on torture and prevent violence against ethnic and religious communities while accepting the vast majority of the UN's recommendations regarding human rights.

Bahrain is now the first country to be subjected to the 47-nation UN Human Rights Council's reviews of all nations' records in 2008 and this year.

This time, the council had issued 176 recommendations for Bahrain. Some of these focused on the government's response to the unrest that began in early 2011, calling for fair trials in the wake of

arrests and prosecutions of demonstrators and guarantees against the use of torture.

Others called for increased cooperation with the UN in its attempts to investigate alleged abuses in Bahrain, where Shiites have been demanding a greater political voice in the country.

In Geneva on Wednesday, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmad Bin Mohammad Al Khalifa told the council, the UN's top human rights body, that Bahrain would accept 158 recommendations, including calls for fair trials and improved religious protections. But he rejected the recommendations for abolishing the death penalty, saying that would violate his country's constitution.

He also offered to provide an interim report on the nation's progress.

"Our actions, more than our words, should dispel any doubts regarding my government's commitment to upholding human rights through the rule of law," he said. "Let us follow the path of dialogue, not propaganda."

Al Khalifa promised his government would tolerate dissent - within what he called “the limits of orderly discourse in a democratic society”. But, he added, “no one has the right to force factionalism upon a society against its will. We welcome peaceful expressions of disagreement, but not incitements to hatred and violence, which damage the social fabric of a nation.”

In November 2011, Bahrain released a 500-page report detailing widespread abuses in the kingdom’s crackdowns on the Shiite-led protests. Bahrain’s rulers authorised a special commission to investigate the nation’s unrest in a bid to ease tensions and promised a broad range of reforms as a result.

The seriousness of the situation that Bahrain continues to face, however, was underscored by the presence of both the foreign minister and US Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner, who came to Geneva for the Bahrain session.

Posner said Bahrain’s government showed “great courage” by sponsoring the commission. “Ten months after the release of the report, however, we are

concerned that the government is losing momentum on implementation,” he said.

Activists focused attention on Bahrain at the UN’s European headquarters in Geneva. Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, said the government’s acceptance of the UN recommendations must be “quickly followed by releasing leaders of peaceful protests, holding accountable high officials responsible for policies of torture, and adopting broader reforms to uphold human rights.”

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-accepts-un-human-rights-recommendations-1.1078849>

- **US urges its ally to act on rights reforms**

Bahrain must halt the excessive use of force by police, official says

Geneva: The United States has urged Bahrain to speed democratic reforms and hold meaningful talks with opposition groups to ensure stability in a strategic Gulf ally at a sensitive time.

Bahrain must halt the excessive use of force by police and prosecute security forces for alleged crimes linked to protests, including torture and deaths of detainees in custody, a senior US official said on Wednesday.

“A stable, democratic healthy Bahrain, one where human rights issues are dealt with appropriately, is a country that’s going to be a strong ally and we need that,” said Michael Posner, US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

Washington values the “strong security relationship” it has had for 60 years with Bahrain, home of the US Fifth Fleet, “particularly in light of things going on in the Gulf now”.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/u-s-urges-its-ally-to-act-on-rights-reforms-1.1078843>

- **Riyadh pledges aid of \$17.9 billion**

Dubai: Saudi Arabia has so far disbursed about a fifth of the much-needed aid it promised to Arab countries since uprisings erupted in the region last year, according

to the IMF, which cited data from Riyadh’s finance ministry.

Riyadh pledged a total of \$17.9 billion (Dh65.7 billion) in loans, grants and other support between the start of 2011 and June 1 this year, to be disbursed over several years, potentially making it a key donor as Arab countries struggle to repair economic damage caused by the uprisings.

It disbursed \$3.7 billion of that amount during the period, the International Monetary Fund said in a report on the Saudi Arabian economy, released this week after regular consultations with the Saudi government.

“Regional support has come both in the form of substantial new pledges of financial assistance and indirectly, as fiscal expansion in Saudi Arabia creates increased demand for imports and also raises remittances from foreign labour employed in the Kingdom,” the IMF said.

Political and economic uncertainties have slowed transfers of aid by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries since the uprisings, analysts have said. The donors

want to prevent economic collapses in Arab countries but are wary of giving large sums quickly to new governments which might turn out to be unfriendly or waste the funds.

Egypt has received \$1.5 billion of the \$4 billion it was promised by Saudi Arabia, while Jordan has received \$1.4 billion of \$2.7 billion, according to the IMF data.

The IMF figures may not include some aid disbursed after June 1. Saudi Arabia has given \$350 million of \$3.6 billion that it pledged to Yemen, the data shows; but Yemeni officials said this month that Riyadh had provided their country with over \$2.2 billion of oil and fuel products this year plus a \$1 billion loan to Yemen's central bank.

Morocco and Tunisia are still waiting for the \$1.25 billion and \$750 million respectively which they were promised, according to the IMF data.

Early last year Bahrain and Oman were promised a total of \$5 billion by Saudi Arabia, part of a \$20 billion pledge by wealthy Gulf Arab states to help the two countries ease social tensions. The money

has not yet started to flow; Bahrain said in June that the aid fund had not yet been capitalised, though it still expected to receive an initial allocation soon.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/riyadh-pledges-aid-of-17-9-billion-1.1078932>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

### • Karzai Dismisses Five Provincial Governors

Mohammad Ghulab Mangal

By RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan

September 20, 2012

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has dismissed five provincial governors as part of a government-declared effort to fight corruption and spur reforms.

Among those dismissed are Mohammad Ghulab Mangal in Helmand Province, who is reportedly considered by British and U.S. officials as an important ally in the fight against the Taliban.

The four other sacked governors are those of the provinces of Kabul, Badghis in the west, Nimroz in the south, and Wardak, south of Kabul.

Another four governors were reshuffled between the provinces of Faryab and Takhar in the north, and Laghman and Logar, adjacent to Kabul.

Munshi Abdul Majeed, the governor of Baghlan, also in the north, was made an adviser to Karzai.

With reporting by Reuters and AFP

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

- **Obama, Karzai Discuss 'Insider' Attacks**

September 20, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

U.S. President Barack Obama has held a video conference with his Afghan counterpart, Hamid Karzai, focusing partly on efforts to stem insider attacks on U.S., coalition, and Afghan forces.

At least 51 foreign troops have been killed in "insider" attacks this year in which

security personnel have turned their weapons on their Western mentors.

Meanwhile, Obama's spokesman, Jay Carney, rejected a call by three U.S. senators -- John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and Joseph Lieberman -- for a "strategic pause" to assess the impact of the killings.

The White House said Obama and Karzai also discussed the need for restraint in the face of "inflammatory materials," an apparent reference to a film made in the United States deemed offensive to Islam that sparked violence in Muslim countries, including Afghanistan.

Based on reporting by AFP and Reuters

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

- **NATO supply vehicles destroyed in Afghanistan**

Press TV

September 20, 2012

Over a dozen NATO supply vehicles carrying goods and fuel for US-led troops have been destroyed in an ambush by militants in southern Afghanistan, Press TV reports.

The attack was carried out on the highway that links Herat to Kandahar in Farah Province late on Wednesday.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, saying its militants attacked and destroyed a convoy of seven trucks and four support vehicles.

The group says it killed at least 14 people and wounded 11 more in the attack.

In a similar incident on Tuesday, another convoy of NATO tankers and supply vehicles came under attack in the southern province of Zabul.

Trucks carrying supplies from Pakistan to the US-led forces deployed in Afghanistan come under frequent attacks in the war-torn country.

Pakistan is the cheapest way for the Western military alliance to dispatch supplies to the foreign forces in the landlocked country.

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

- **Afghans protest against US-made anti-Islam film**

Press TV

September 20, 2012

Thousands of people have poured onto streets in Afghanistan's Bamyan Province in protest against an anti-Islam film produced in the United State.

Protesters shouted anti-US slogans in the province's central city of Bamyan, on Thursday, calling on the Afghan government to cut ties with Washington.

Officials say the protests have been peaceful.

Earlier in the day, hundreds of protesters gathered in Kabul, calling for the trial of those behind the production of the sacrilegious movie and demanded that the government break all diplomatic ties with Washington.

On Wednesday, about 1,000 angry people and university students in the eastern province of Nangarhar expressed their outrage against the film that insults Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Over the past days, thousands of Afghan protesters have staged anti-US demonstrations.

Outrage and anti-US sentiment are growing across the world over the insulting movie, with protests being held in tens of countries.

According to AFP, more than 30 people have been killed around the world since protests began last week.

Protesters demand that Washington apologize to the Muslim world over the film, which was reportedly financed by more than 100 Zionist Jews.

Meanwhile, similar demonstrations are expected to increase in the coming days following a French magazine's publishing of insulting cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on Wednesday.

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

- **Recent US-led airstrike killed Afghan civilians: Fact-finding mission**

Press TV  
September 19, 2012

An Afghan government-appointed fact-finding mission says that a recent US-led airstrike in the eastern province of Laghman targeted civilians, Press TV reports.

The fact-finding mission set up by President Hamed Karzai announced on Wednesday that seven women and a child were killed in the airstrike that was conducted in Alingar district on September 16.

Nineteen other women and children were also injured in the attack, the mission said.

The rise in civilian casualties in NATO attacks has strained relations between Karzai and his Western allies, who are under increasing pressure at home over the unpopular war.

The US-led war in Afghanistan began in 2001. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but insecurity continues to rise across the country despite the presence of about 130,000 foreign forces.

The United Nations announced on February 4 that 2011 was the deadliest year on record for Afghan civilians. The

death toll rose eight percent compared to the year before and was roughly double the figure for 2007.

Overall, 3,021 civilians died in violence related to the war and 4,507 were injured in 2011.

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

- **China donates 100 ambulances to Afghanistan**

KABUL, Sept. 20 (Xinhua) -- The government of China donated 100 ambulances to Afghanistan's Public Health Ministry on Thursday, Public Health Ministry said in a statement released here.

"The People Republic of China donated 100 new ambulances worth 4 million U.S. dollars to the Ministry for Public Health and a technical team of China would also train Afghans on how to maintain and repair the ambulances," the statement added.

Afghan minister for public health Dr. Saraya Dalil, while thanking China for the contribution, said the ambulances will be distributed to all the health centers in the provinces.

Speaking on the occasion, Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan Xu Feihong said that China would continue to support Afghanistan and donation of these ambulances speaks of Chinese government firm commitment in this regard.

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

- **British Soldier Gives Birth In Afghanistan**

September 20, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

A British servicewoman has given birth to a baby boy in Afghanistan.

The British Defense Ministry said the mother and her baby were both in "stable condition," following the birth on September 18 in Helmand Province's Camp Bastion.

In a statement on September 19, the ministry said a specialist pediatric team is to fly to Afghanistan in the next few days "in order to provide appropriate care for mother and baby on the flight home."

The ministry also said it was "unaware" of the woman's pregnancy, adding that "it is not military policy to allow servicewomen to deploy on operations if they are pregnant."

British media reports said the woman, a Royal Artillery gunner who has not been named, only learned she was about to give birth after complaining of stomach pains.

Based on reporting by AFP and the BBC

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

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*\*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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