



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

**Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset**

**The Restructuring Procees of Iraq**

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Call to host Maliki over security deterioration - MP**

BAGHDAD, Sep 25 / Aswat al-Iraq: Calls were raised today by an al-Iraqiya Bloc MP to host Premier Nouri al-Maliki in the Parliament due to the ongoing deterioration in the security situation in the country, as well as the atrocities of the Syrian army on the Iraqi Qaem border area.

MP Khalid Abdulla al-Alwani, in a statement obtained by Aswat al-Iraq, criticized the "government's silence" with regards to these events.

The increase in assassination attempts is "a dangerous indication of the increasing violence in Iraq," he pointed out.

Alwani criticized discussing the infrastructure law, while neglecting the security issue in the parliament.

He charged the Parliamentary Security Commission with the responsibility, as it is "the main organ concerned with following up on the security issues."

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28yniffgvwgtqgcrz4rrizqzc%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=150656&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%28yniffgvwgtqgcrz4rrizqzc%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150656&l=1)

- **Citizen MP describes Maliki's statements over corruption in Infrastructure law as "Dangerous"**

Baghdad, Sep 25 (AIN) –MP, Hamid al-Khudhari, of the Citizen bloc stated "All the political blocs support the Infrastructure law draft because it serves Iraq, but there are some problems in it that need to be fixed in order to be endorsed," noting that "Citizen bloc supports this law draft."

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he stated "Iraq needs to be built either by the Infrastructure law draft or any other laws where those who do not want to build it are suspected of being national."

"The Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, during the parliament session held last week, has referred to the existence of corruption within this law draft which is considered a dangerous issue," he added, noting that "Maliki had to say that we will eliminate this corruption and not to call for endorsing this law in addition there should be a competition among the companies

that wish to perform projects within this law draft."

"The projects included in this law draft must be mentioned in order to make the MPs vote on this law," he concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19308](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19308)

- **KDP denies Barzani's decision of withdrawing powers from his deputy**

Shafaq News, Sep 25 / Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) denied on Tuesday that President of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani has withdrawn the presidency of the region powers from his deputy, Kosert Rasool during his visit to a number of European countries.

The spokesman of KDP, Jaafar Ibrahim said in a statement in which "Shafaq News" received a copy of it that "Standards Kurds site published in 23 of Sept, news that the Kurdish regional president, Massoud Barzani has commissioned the secretary of the Political Bureau of the Party, Fathil Mirani to inform his deputy, Kosert Rasool Ali not to use the authorities

of the president of the region during his travels abroad."

"This news is false," stressing that "publishing such lies aims to sabotage and poison the condition."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3632-kdp-denies-barzani-decision-of-withdrawing-powers-from-his-deputy.html>

- **Sayadi: Targeting primary school in Anbar aims to create sectarian sedition**

Baghdad, Sep 25 (AIN) –The independent MP, Kadhim al-Sayadi stated "Targeting the primary school in Anbar province aims to create a sectarian sedition among the Iraqis and destroy the education in Iraq."

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he stated "The school lies in the Sunni area of Anbar province where al-Qaeda Terrorist Organization wants to send a message to show that there is no life in Iraq by conducting such attack and to create a sectarian sedition in addition to destroying the educational process in Iraq."

"All know the intentions of the armed groups that did not exclude anyone through their attacks," he concluded.

A suicide bomber driving a car bomb detonated it targeting a Primary School in western Anbar on Monday.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19317](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19317)

- **Hundreds of local councils' members demonstrate before Parliament building**

Baghdad, Sep 25 (AIN) -Hundreds of members of the Municipal Councils from provinces of central and southern Iraq demonstrated in front of the Parliament building to demand for their retirement rights.

AIN correspondent reported on Tuesday "Hundreds of members of Municipal Councils demonstrated before the Parliament building demanding to abolish the item No.40 of 2012 general budget law which stipulated to cancel granting pensions for the retired members."

"The demonstrators called to treat them equally with the MPs who still receive their retirement salaries," AIN correspondent added.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19320](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19320)

- **Clinton pushes Iraqi vice-president on overflights**

WASHINGTON, Sept 25, 2012 (AFP) - US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Tuesday pushed Iraq to deliver on pledges to stop flights by Iran over its territory, which are feared to be carrying arms to the Syrian regime.

Clinton met with Iraqi Vice President Khudayr al-Khuzai on the sidelines of a UN summit to discuss events in Iraq as well as the situation in Syria.

"We have made very clear to the Iraqis that they need to put a stop to these flights. They have taken some encouraging first steps. We saw that they stopped a North Korean flight," a US official said late Tuesday.

Last week, Iraq denied permission for a North Korean aircraft to cross its airspace on its way to Syria over suspicions it was carrying arms and advisers there, the Iraqi premier's spokesman said.

The Iraqi leadership had made public announcements that they "certainly are not going to allow flights from Iran that carry military equipment, re-supplying of Syrian troops to go through their airspace," the US official added.

"They just need to follow through and deliver on that. And we very much heard from our meeting with the vice president of Iraq that is in fact their intent and that is their position.

<http://wires.univision.com/english/article/2012-09-25/clinton-pushes-iraqi-vice-president>

- **Militants strike Iraq security forces, kill nine**

BAGHDAD, Sep 25 — Militants launched a wave of attacks against security forces in Iraq on Tuesday, killing nine police officers and soldiers and wounding 11, security and medical officials said.

While insurgents opposed to the Baghdad government are regarded as weaker than in past years, they have shown they can strike at even the most highly secured sites in the country.

Targets in recent months have included a military base, the anti-terrorism directorate in Baghdad, a prison and an entrance to Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone, where the Iraqi government is headquartered.

On Tuesday in Tarmiyah, north of Baghdad, militants attacked a police station with two car bombs, rocket-propelled grenades and Kalashnikov assault rifles, killing one policeman and wounding two, an interior ministry official and a medical source said.

Farther north, gunmen attacked a police patrol in the village of Al-Mukhisa near the city of Baquba, killing one policeman and wounding three, a police lieutenant colonel and a doctor said.

A policeman was shot dead west of the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk on his way to work, police Captain Ahmed Khalaf said.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gddwKhXMnfhaEMok1UQ-mnPsMrpQ?docId=CNG.f4d4fec426309741ec996fb87c31f219.1a1>

- **Iraq cabinet approves 3 oil and gas deals**

BAGHDAD, Sept 25 (Reuters) - As part of Iraq's drive to attract investment to develop its energy sector, the cabinet has approved three oil and gas contracts awarded to foreign firms in a May auction, the government spokesman said.

Iraq, a member of OPEC, is expected to be the world's biggest source of new oil supplies over the next few years.

It has signed contracts with international oil companies and plans to open up more bidding rounds for additional oil and gas blocks.

Cabinet approved an initial gas exploration contract with Pakistan Petroleum for gas block 8 and another deal with a group led by Lukoil to develop Iraq's oil block 10, spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said.

It also approved an initial deal with Russia's Bashneft to develop Iraq's oil block 12, but decided to delay approval of a contract signed with a consortium led by Kuwait Energy for oil block 9.

"Cabinet decided to delay approval of a contract for block 9 until the oil ministry completes some of its procedures," Dabbagh said, without giving more details.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/25/iraq-energy-idINL5E8KPBDB20120925>

- **Iraq archives chief moves to seal Saddam-era files**

BAGHDAD, Sept 26, 2012 (AFP) - The terror of Saddam Hussein's secret police has lived on long after his fall through their millions of reports, which are still dragged up by Iraqi politicians and the media, often with damaging results.

But Saad Iskander, the head of Iraq's national archives, thinks the documents have been used for long enough, and is pushing legislation that would criminalise their release without the consent of the people they concern.

"Baath party officials, the secret organisations, the secret police, they all received and wrote millions and even billions of reports on ordinary people, party officials," Iskander told AFP.

It was "an awful dictatorship that dominated all aspects of life, not only through terror but also through documentation and spying."

But unlike in Germany, where an agency was set up after reunification to process the documents of the former East Germany's Stasi secret police, Iraq saw its archives dispersed to the four winds after Saddam's overthrow by a 2003 US-led invasion.

The US Pentagon obtained 48,000 boxes of documents and the Central Intelligence Agency acquired millions of papers, as did Iraqi political parties, individuals and the media, Iskander said.

<http://www.france24.com/en/20120926-iraq-archives-chief-moves-seal-saddam-era-files>

- **Iraqi Parliament votes on General Amnesty and infrastructure laws tomorrow**

BAGHDAD / NINA/ Iraqi Council of Representatives will vote, in its session tomorrow, on the General Amnesty the laws of infrastructure, in addition to voting on the ninth member of the Electoral Commission.

The information department in the parliament said that tomorrow's agenda will also include voting on the transport agreement of (people and goods) between Iraq and Jordan and the ratification of the Arab Convention against Organized Crime; in addition to voting on Iraq's accession to the Convention of the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

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

- **Iraqi delegation meets Hillary Clinton in New York.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / the Iraqi delegation participating in the meetings of the session / 67 / of the General Assembly of

the United Nations met with the U.S Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

A statement for the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that both sides discussed the U.S- Iraq relationships and the work of the joint committees of the strategic framework agreement.

The statement issued today pointed out that "the Iraqi delegation stressed, during the meeting, the importance of the U.S. support for Iraqi efforts aimed to get out of Chapter VII and address the remaining issues with the State of Kuwait in a spirit of constructive cooperation and respect for the shared interests of the two countries within the framework of international legitimacy resolutions.

The statement said that the Iraqi position, concerning the Syrian crisis, was presented during the meeting and emphasizing the importance of the political transition process and stops the bloodshed, adding that Iraq supports the UN and Arab envoy's mission in not to militarize the conflict as well as discuss the status of the Syrian refugees in Iraq.

The statement noted that "the two sides reviewed a number of future steps and actions to activate bilateral relations and sustain communication and consultation on political and security developments in the region.

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

- **Zebari meets his Libyan counterpart in New York.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari discussed with the Libyan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ashour Bin Kayal, in the headquarters of the United Nations, bilateral relations and ways of developing them to serve the common interests after the announcement of the resumption of the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

A statement for the Ministry issued today said that the meeting dealt with the most Arab and international prominent issues of common concern. According to the statement, Zebari said that Iraq has fulfilled its obligations in supporting the ongoing transformations in Libya, to serve

strengthening the political and constitutional process under way in Libya.

Zebari continues his meetings and contacts with his Arab and foreign countries counterparts participating in the meetings of the General Assembly of the United Nations, to clarify the Iraqi positions towards the regional and international issues, as well as bilateral relations.

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

- **Nechirvan Barzani receives an official invitation to visit Tehran.**

Erbil / NINA / Nechirvan Barzani, the head of the Kurdistan Regional Government has received an official invitation from the Iranian government to visit Tehran.

The government statement said that Barzani's visit to Tehran comes within the framework of strengthening bilateral relations between the Kurdistan region and the Islamic Republic of Iran, adding that he is scheduled to meet, during this visit, senior Iranian officials to discuss bilateral relations and the current situation in Iraq and the region.

The statement noted out that the Kurdistan Regional Government is keen to establish good relations with the neighboring countries.

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

- **Nusayif urges Iraqi Government to consider effects of Mubarak Port's debris**

Baghdad (AIN) –The Iraqiya Hurra Bloc's MP Aliya Nusayif renewed its call for the legislative and executive authorities to discuss with the Kuwaiti side the issue of the debris used in the Kuwaiti Mubarak Port which is thrown towards the Iraqi Um Qasr Port.

In a press statement, Nusayif expressed her denouncement towards “The Iraqi silence over the serious environmental effects of throwing the debris from Mubarak Port towards the Iraqi sides near Um Qasr Port.”

“The Kuwaiti violations require an official protest from Iraq through the Diplomatic and Governmental channels,” she added.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=19371:nusayif-urges-iraqi-government-to-consider-effects-of-mubarak-ports-debris&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19371:nusayif-urges-iraqi-government-to-consider-effects-of-mubarak-ports-debris&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **Maliki to visit Russia to supply Iraq with warplanes and military equipments**



Shafaq News / An official source revealed on Wednesday that the Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki held an agreement with Russia to supply Iraq with warplanes and military equipments worth of an estimated \$ 5 billion in to be visit conducted next month at the head of a senior delegation.

The source told "Shafaq News", that "the Defense Minister, Saadoun al-Dulaimi will visit Russia next month to put the final touches to the military contracts valued at \$ 5 billion."

"Signing these contracts will be during the Prime Minister , Nuri al-Maliki's visit to Moscow on the tenth of next October," noting that " senior Russian officials will be present in the meeting and it is possibly to discuss the Syrian crisis file."

The source said that "the military contracts will include Sukhoi and MiG aircrafts and Russian Mi helicopters as well as military equipments."

U.S. officials revealed earlier that Iraq will receive the first batch of American fighters, "F - 16" in September 2014.

Kurds leaders led by president of Kurdistan region, Massoud Barzani say that Maliki is awaiting the U.S. aircraft deal of F-16 to strike the Kurds, but Maliki denied this and said that Iraq doesn't think of internal wars and will not allow firing one shot on the Kurds.

Barzani launched an attack last April on al-Maliki, saying that he did not commit to any promise made for the Kurds, noting at the same time that the Kurdistan informed Washington that it refuses to receive the F16 aircrafts as long as al-Maliki is in power.

Iraq has paid the first installment last December in the agreement to purchase the first group of warplanes worth about three billion dollars.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3636-maliki-to-visit-russia-to-supply-iraq-with-warplanes-and-military-equipments-.html>

- **Nujaifi accuses the Interior Ministry of igniting sectarian violence**

Shafaq News / The governor of Nineveh province, Ethel al-Nujaifi accused on Wednesday, the Iraqi Interior Ministry of "igniting the sectarian violence " again in areas that witnesses sectarian, religious and national pluralism at the outskirts of Mosul city through a special Shabak regiment, expecting the outbreak of conflicts among the components in the province in the event of continuing to deal with the security file this way.

Nujaifi said in an interview with "Shafaq News" that "a committee of the Ministry of Interior has completed recruiting 500 people from Shabak people and forming a special regiment for them in Hamdaniya district, northeast of Mosul after visiting the district last week," he considered

"choosing the mentioned district to volunteer as has sectarian sides because the majority of people there are Shabak and Christian."

The governor of Nineveh province added that "the province had already submitted such a subject after the province has approached the Interior Ministry at the beginning of this year and the latter mentioned that the matter was delayed at the present time, but we were surprised constantly from such procedures and recruiting took place according to the desire".

Nujaifi declined the formation of Shabak Regiment by saying that "the province cannot accept the formation of regiments on sectarian bases, as we always sought to end this state in which Tal Afar regiments used to be by merging the regiments together to end the sectarian condition", noting that "this is a new attempt to raise the problem in the outskirts of Mosul city and I fear that innocent people of Shabak would pay the price."

Nujaifi added that "Nineveh provincial council will demand the federal government to cancel such a decision and

will try to talk to the province MPs in the parliament to repeal such a procedure and convert the volunteering for all the people of Hamdaniya district without sectarian or religious discrimination."

It is worth mentioning that Hamdaniya district has witnessed in recent years sectarian tension from time to time between the Christians and the Shabak people because of Shabak attempt to retrieve lands, they claim that it's their own while Christians reject this and say that Hamdaniya district is a Christian territory and will remain Christian.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3635-nujaifi-accuses-the-interior-ministry-of-igniting-sectarian-violence-.html>

- **Close source to Barzani calls for the independence of Kurdistan**

Shafaq News / A leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Adham Barzani called on Tuesday for Kurdistan province independency and to ensure "a bright future under Kurdistan flag."

Adham Barzani, a relative of Kurdistan Region President, Massoud Barzani wrote a comment on a baby picture wearing a

Kurdish costume, carrying Kurdistan flag, published in his page on the social networking site (Facebook) and briefed by "Shafaq News", saying that "under this flag, toward a bright and independence future."

Adham Barzani belongs to Kurdistan Region President Massoud Barzani's family, he is a member of Kurdistan Democratic Party and one of the preachers to establish a Kurdish state comprising of all (parts) of Kurdistan in Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria, as stated by him from time to time, although of not the party to which he belongs to didn't declare for independency frankly.

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<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/news/3634-close-source-to-barzani-calls-for-the-independence-of-kurdistan.html>

- **PUK and Gorran Meet for First Time in Six Years**

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan Region — The leaders of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Change Movement (Gorran) met on Sunday for the first time in six years.

Nawshirwan Mustafa visited Iraqi President and PUK leader Jalal Talabani after years of tension and rivalry between the two sides. Mustafa was Talabani's

deputy in the PUK until he split and formed his own Gorran party in 2009.

The visit came after Talabani returned from receiving treatment in Germany where he was hospitalized for around three months.

"We have had meetings and open channels of communication for nearly a year," said Azad Jundiyan, PUK's spokesman. "Some social figures mediated and, as a result, Mr. Mustafa and his delegation decided to visit Mr. Talabani."

Following the meeting, both leaders told journalists that they shared identical views on many issues in Iraqi and Kurdish politics.

They also added that the draft version of Kurdistan's constitution, ratified last year by MPs, needs to be returned to the chamber for further amendment and that some other laws "with a national dimension" need to be revised by parliament.

President Talabani said that the power-sharing "strategic agreement" that exists between the PUK and the Kurdistan

Democratic Party (KDP) needs to be adjusted as well. The KDP and PUK are the two ruling parties in Kurdistan's government.

There has been speculation that the KDP might be alarmed by the recent rapprochement between the PUK and Gorran.

But Gorran leaders say they have informed the KDP about their meeting with the PUK.

Fazil Mirani, a senior KDP politician, apparently told Gorran leaders that his party "has no suspicions about the relations between the PUK and Gorran."

During the Kurdistan Region's parliamentary elections in July 2009, Gorran emerged as a major power, taking over PUK stronghold Sulaimani and forming the opposition.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5247.html>

- **Peshmerga Budget Next on Agenda in Baghdad-Erbil Talks**

ERBİL, Kurdistan Region — After Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) renewed exportation of oil as a goodwill gesture toward the central government, tensions between Baghdad and Erbil seem to have eased.

Now, there are new attempts to resolve the Peshmerga budget issue, one of the three main issues between Baghdad and the KRG.

In the Iraqi constitution, the Peshmerga is described as the "Kurdistan Region's guardian." The constitution also regards the Peshmerga as part of the Iraqi defense system, and therefore its budget must be provided by the Iraqi Ministry of Defense.

However, the spokesperson for the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga says that his ministry has not received its budget from Iraq's Ministry of Defense for the past five years.

Every year, during the budget debate in Iraqi Parliament, the majority approves that the central government must provide a budget for the Peshmerga forces.

Jabbar Yawar, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Peshmerga, told Rudaw that they have not received their budget from the central government due to the “suspension of agreements.”

Yawar estimates that the total budget Baghdad has withheld from the Peshmerga is around USD\$7 million.

“Since 2007, a total budget of \$50 million has been allocated to Iraq’s Ministry of Defense,” he said. “The KRG’s Ministry of Peshmerga was entitled to 17 percent of the budget, which makes for a total of \$7 million.”

Hamid Mutlaq, a member of the security and defense committee in Iraqi Parliament, told Rudaw, “The Peshmerga budget issue has not been discussed by the committee.”

He added, “The committee is going to meet the officials from Iraq’s Ministry of Defense and the KRG’s Ministry of Peshmerga to discuss the disputes between the two and learn about the issues in detail.”

Mutlaq insisted that the issue must be resolved through negotiations between the central government and the KRG.

Hassan Jihad, a member of the security and defense committee in Iraqi Parliament, said, “This week, the committee will meet with the KRG Ministry of Peshmerga to discuss its budget issue, along with other issues, such as the disputed territories and discussing the previous agreements between the KRG and Baghdad.”

He added that the committee will hold a similar meeting with Iraq’s Ministry of Defense.

“We are optimistic that the KRG and Baghdad will resolve the issues just as they resolved their disagreements over oil,” Jihad said.

Yawar said that his ministry has not yet been informed about such a meeting with the security and defense committee, but added that if asked they would engage in the meeting without hesitation.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5246.html>

- **Officials Insist No Ulterior Motive Behind Timing of Barzani's Trip**

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region -- Senior officials of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) dismiss claims that Kurdistan President Massoud Barzani's recent visit abroad was aimed at interfering with Jalal Talabani's efforts to re-establish negotiations between Iraqi parties.

Barzani left Kurdistan on Sept. 16 to participate in a number of conferences in Europe and followed by a visit to Russia. His visit coincided with Talabani's return to Kurdistan after being in Germany for three months to undergo a medical operation.

Some observers viewed the timing of the trip as revenge on Barzani's part for Talabani's role in aborting efforts to withdraw confidence from the Iraqi prime minister in the summer.

In June, Barzani led an attempt to withdraw confidence from Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, but Talabani claimed the number of signatures on the motion was insufficient to bring the matter to parliament.

Prior to Talabani's return, PUK officials announced that talks between Iraqi parties would resume in order to end the current political crisis in Iraq, which resulted from the attempt to remove Maliki from office.

According to an informed source in the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Talabani was to return to Kurdistan on Sept. 6 but his trip was postponed. President Barzani was in contact with Talabani before he left for Europe and planned to visit Talabani in Germany. However, Talabani told Barzani that a visit was not necessary, and that they would meet when he returned to Kurdistan.

They were constant contact. Barzani had to keep the commitments he had set up abroad, and Talabani was aware of this fact.

Halo Penjweni, a member of the PUK leadership council, told Rudaw, "Relations between Talabani and Barzani are at a high level."

"The first delegate to visit Talabani after his return was from the KDP," Penjweni said, adding that it was Nechirvan Barzani,

the KDP's vice president and Kurdistan's prime minister, who led the way.

Furthermore, Fareed Assasard, a member of the PUK leadership council, told Rudaw, "Among the PUK ranks, there was concern about the timing of Barzani's trip. But later we found out that Talabani knew about the visit, and the concerns faded away."

He added, "We have reached a decision that all the steps to be taken in Baghdad have to be taken together (PUK and KDP). No unilateral steps will be taken."

"There were too many messages directed at Talabani asking him to return," Assasard said. "Therefore, he canceled his trip to the U.S. and returned home earlier."

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5244.html>

- **Ankara seeks to mend frosty ties with Baghdad: Erdogan invites Maliki**

Maliki receives invitation to visit Ankara from his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, high-ranking Iraqi official says.

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has received an invitation to visit Ankara from his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a high-ranking Iraqi official said on Tuesday.

Erdogan "sent an official invitation to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki a few days ago to visit Ankara, the official said on condition of anonymity. "It is not certain if he will accept."

Ties between Iraq and Turkey have been marred by a flurry of disputes this year, most recently Ankara's refusal to extradite Iraqi Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi, who has been sentenced to death in absentia by an Iraqi court.

In August, Maliki accused Turkey of treating the autonomous Kurdistan region of north Iraq, with which it has close economic ties, as an "independent state."

Earlier that month, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu visited the disputed northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk without informing Baghdad, infuriating Iraq and taking relations to a new low.

In July, Iraq warned Ankara against "any violations" of its territory and airspace, and instructed the foreign ministry to register a complaint at the UN Security Council, after Turkish jets bombed Kurdish rebels in Kurdistan.

A few days earlier, Iraq called on Turkey to stop accepting "illegal" transfers of crude oil from Kurdistan, which an official from the region said had begun earlier in the month.

And in April, Maliki said that Turkey was becoming a "hostile state" in the region, accusing Erdogan of interfering in internal Iraqi affairs.

His remarks came after the Turkish premier accused Maliki's Shiite-led government of stoking sectarian tensions.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54557>

## 2. IRAN

- **West turns up heat on Iran and Syria at UN**

Western and Arab leaders ramped up the pressure on Syria and Iran at the United

Nations on Tuesday, as US President Barack Obama vowed to keep Tehran from getting its hands on nuclear weapons.

The United States, France and Qatar led the charge as the West and its allies attempted to use the UN General Assembly to win support for tougher international action against the Middle East's twin pariah regimes.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon set the tone, condemning the bloodshed in Syria, where the beleaguered regime is battling an armed revolt and subjecting its citizens to what the UN peace envoy dubbed "medieval forms of torture."

Under pressure from his domestic rivals to take a tough stance, Obama went further, declaring: "The regime of Bashar al-Assad must come to an end so the suffering of the Syrian people can stop, and a new dawn can begin."

The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, a key supporter of the Syrian opposition, called for an Arab military intervention.

"It is better for Arab countries themselves to intervene out of their humanitarian, political and military duties and do what is necessary to stop the bloodshed," he told the General Assembly.

A US State Department official told AFP that the United States will soon announce an increase in its aid to the Syrian rebels, but would still stop short of sending weapons and ammunition.

And French President Francois Hollande urged the United Nations to declare protected areas in "liberated zones" under opposition control in Syria so that humanitarian aid could reach refugees.

Obama was also unequivocal on Iran, which is locked in a standoff with the West over a nuclear program that Washington alleges is designed to produce a weapon that could tip the balance of power in an already volatile region.

"Make no mistake. A nuclear-armed Iran is not a challenge that can be contained. It would threaten the elimination of Israel, the security of Gulf nations, and the stability of the global economy," Obama warned.

"That is why a coalition of countries is holding the Iranian government accountable. And that is why the United States will do what we must to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," he declared.

Hollande also took a tough line on Iran, accusing it of supplying weapons and men to Assad to prop up his regime and dubbing this "unacceptable."

Six weeks before his re-election bid is decided, Obama is under pressure on the foreign policy front, with criticism of his handling of the killing of US diplomats and claims he is not standing closely enough behind Israel.

His speech aimed to counter those claims from White House rival Mitt Romney and also renew his outreach to the Muslim world after two weeks of anti-American violence triggered by an online video that insulted Islam.

Obama said the Arab Spring would lead to improved democracy and living standards in a Middle East region more in line with US values but, while he condemned the

film, he insisted no insults could justify violence.



He vowed that the militants who stormed the US consulate in Benghazi on September 11, killing the American Ambassador to Libya and three colleagues, would face justice, and said the United States would always defend free speech.

"There are no words that excuse the killing of innocents. There is no video that justifies an attack on an embassy," he said.

"There is no slander that provides an excuse for people to burn a restaurant in Lebanon, or destroy a school in Tunis, or cause death and destruction in Pakistan," he said.

Debate in New York in the run-up to the assembly focused on the violence in Syria and the risk that the Iranian stand-off

could lead to a broader conflict if Israel or the United States launched a pre-emptive strike.

Ban spoke for many delegates when he called on world powers to put aside their differences and unite behind a plan to pressure the parties to settle their conflicts through negotiation.

The UN chief dubbed the Syria conflict "a regional calamity with global ramifications" and said: "The international community should not look the other way as violence spirals out of control."

"We must stop the violence and flow of arms to both sides and set in motion a Syrian-led transition as soon as possible," Ban added.

The 15-nation Security Council has become paralyzed by deadlock over the 18-month-old war, which Syrian activists say has left more than 29,000 dead.

Ban also expressed concerns for the mounting tensions surrounding Iran, denouncing what he called: "The shrill war talk of recent weeks."

While Obama took no option off the table in dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions, Ban called on the United Nations to reject threats of military action, warning: "Any such attacks would be devastating."

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is in New York, shrugged off talk of an attack on his country's nuclear facilities and said the Islamic republic would not end what it claims is peaceful civilian nuclear research.

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

- **Iran's economy reeling under heavy sanctions**

Government initiatives to maintain rial's value, volume of oil exports have failed to reverse crushing weight of Western sanctions.

By Marc Burleigh - TEHRAN

Iran's oil-dependent economy was showing the strain of punishing Western sanctions on Tuesday, as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad prepared to address the UN General Assembly in New York.

The Iranian currency dived nearly 4.0 percent, close to its all-time low against the dollar, while thousands of workers publicly complained of unpaid wages, importers struggled to pay for goods, inflation climbed and travel agencies bemoaned a rapidly shrinking pool of travellers able to afford to go abroad.

Government initiatives to maintain the value of the rial and the volume of oil exports have failed to reverse the crushing weight of the sanctions. Both have halved from their levels of a year ago.

Iran's leaders, though, are defiant in the face of the Western pressure, vowing to never roll back its nuclear programme as demanded by the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany.

Ahmadinejad was expected to stress that defiance in a speech to the annual General Assembly on Wednesday.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has already ordered Iran to adopt an "economy of resistance" to weather the sanctions.

Officials have told national media to avoid reporting on the "bleak" domestic situation and instead emphasise positive economic stories.

Evidence of the difficulties still surfaced, though, driven by an EU embargo on Iranian oil and US sanctions on financial transactions involving Iran's central bank.

A prominent MP, Mohammad Reza Bahonar, was quoted at the weekend by the ISNA news agency as saying oil exports in June-July had dropped to "around 800,000 barrels per day" -- a low not seen in more than two decades, and less than half the 2.3-2.4 million barrels per day of a year ago.

Bahonar's oil export figures roughly tallied with those given by OPEC and the International Energy Agency.

While crude exports were expected to rebound a little in September as South Korea resumed buying some Iranian oil, they were expected to continue well below recent historic levels.

Ahmadinejad early this month also admitted Iran faced "problems" selling its

oil, which accounts for nearly half of budget revenues. But he insisted his country would manage. Both he and Khamenei have urged lesser economic dependence on oil sales.

#### Ordinary Iranians struggling

Iran's government and ordinary citizens alike were struggling with the sanctions, with food costs notably soaring.

The ILNA news agency reported that a letter on behalf of 20,000 workers from across the country was sent to Labour Minister Abdolreza Sheikholeslami complaining they had not been paid and demanding an increase to their salaries of \$120 to \$285 a month that they said were "way below the poverty line."

Better-off Iranians were cutting back on travel because of the sharply weakened rial.

"Iranians who would have travelled abroad are more likely to go to domestic destinations like Kish or Mashhad," an employee in a small independent Tehran travel agency who gave her first name as Pantea said.

"Many Iranians who used to go on domestic trips simply can't afford it now."

Tour companies trying to fill half-empty flights in the middle of the week to Turkey have taken to trying to sell last-minute flights for as little as \$60 return via mass text messages.

Iranian officials are increasingly focusing on the problems.

"According to the statistics, there is a strong rise in unemployment, and we need to find a solution. Official statistics also show inflation is at 22 percent, which is very high, and in some areas it's even higher," parliamentary speaker Ali Larijani was quoted as saying by ISNA.

The US Treasury official tasked with deploying US sanctions, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen, two weeks ago gave a speech to a law school at New York University in which he said: "Put simply, Iran's economy is struggling."

He said that was because of the sanctions -- and also "the Iranian government's

continued gross mismanagement of its domestic economy."

He said the slump in oil exports was costing Iran "up to \$5 billion a month, forcing the Iranian government to cut its budget because of a lack of revenue."

Cohen said that, as long as Iran refused to negotiate curbs on its nuclear activities, "we will continue to devise new and enhanced sanctions."

Britain, France and Germany are also urging their European Union partners "to further step up the pressure" on Iran. Further sanctions targeting the Islamic republic's energy, finance, trade and transportation sectors are expected to be formally adopted on October 15.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54555>

- **Iran, Algeria Review Latest Regional Developments**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian and Algerian top diplomats Ali Akbar Salehi and Mourad Medelci in a meeting in New York discussed the latest important regional developments, specially the Syrian crisis.

Salehi and Medelci discussed regional developments, specially the Syrian crisis, and exchanged views on ways to solve the current problems in Syria, on the sidelined of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York on Tuesday.

The Iranian senior diplomat expounded on results of his visit to Cairo and Damascus and his efforts to end violence in Syria.

The Algerian foreign minister, for his part, expressed pleasure with Iran's recent efforts and contacts in the region in connection with Syrian crisis, and called it important and in direction of interests of the region and the Islamic world.

The two foreign ministers also expressed pleasure with close ties between Tehran and Algiers and cooperation in all fields, and discussed ways to strengthen mutual cooperation to the interests of both countries.

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

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

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

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106242304>

- **Iranian, Egyptian Presidents Likely to Meet in New York**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Egyptian counterpart Mohammad Mursi are very likely to attend bilateral talks in New York

in coming days, an Egyptian spokesman announced on Tuesday.

Spokesman of Egypt's Presidential Office Yasser Ali was quoted by Arab daily Youm 7 (al-Youm al-Sabe) as saying that preparatory measures have been adopted to pave the way for the two presidents to have bilateral talks on the sidelines of the annual UN General-Assembly meeting underway in New York.

But, Ali reiterated that the meeting has not been finalized yet.

He added that in case of a meeting, the two sides will discuss the issue of Syria and the outcomes of the quadrilateral meeting of the Contact Group on Syria held in Cairo earlier this month.

Last week, Mursi had stressed Iran's crucial role in resolving the regional crisis, including the problem of Syria, adding that Cairo favors strong regional cooperation with Tehran.



Speaking in a televised interview, his first to state TV since his election last June, Mursi described Iran as "a main player in the region that could have an active and supportive role in solving the Syrian problem."

Last Monday, Iranian, Egyptian and Turkish foreign ministers attended a meeting of the Contact Group on Syria in a bid to find a peaceful solution to the current crisis in the Arab country.

Saudi Arabia was not represented in the meeting of the contact group on Syria as his foreign minister was reportedly suffering an ailment.

In a joint press conference after tripartite talks with Mohammed Kamel Amr and Ahmet Davutoglu, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi underlined the need for patience and awareness to restore calm in Syria, and said that only a solution agreed

by all Syrians can soothe the crisis in the Arab country.

Salehi also said that members of the Contact Group on Syria share identical views about finding a solution to the current crisis in Syria.

"The common ground between us is more than our differences," Salehi told reporters.

The Iranian minister emphasized that there must be a Syrian solution and not one imposed from the outside.

During the press conference, Davutoglu called for a diplomatic solution to the Syrian crisis, adding that the group of four countries agreed on some common points.

Meantime, Kamel Amr said it was too early to devise a specific plan and stated that the talks would continue in New York on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly session.

The three foreign ministers also held a meeting with UN-Arab League Special

Envoy on Syria Lakhdar Brahimi and Arab League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106242222>

- **Minister: Iran Has No. 1 Defense Industries in Region**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said Iran has the most capable defense industries in the region, but its military preparedness and capabilities merely serve deterrent purposes.

"Today, Iran has the main say in all the naval, ground and air defense industries. Of course, Iran intends to attack nowhere, and this (military) preparedness is a deterrent power," Najjar said on Tuesday.

He cautioned enemies of Iran's crushing response to any possible aggression, and said, "The Islamic Iran does not want to invade or wage aggression against any other country, but the response of Islamic warriors to any enemy military aggression will be crushing."



Yesterday, Iran unveiled a light armored vehicle and an armored personnel carrier as part of its broader plan for increasing mobility of its armed forces.

The light armored vehicle, Howeize, and Talaeiyeh armored infantry carrier were officially unveiled in a ceremony attended by Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi.

Speaking to reporters, Vahidi said that the newly unveiled vehicles produced by the Defense Industries Organization were a "great step" in increasing mobility and operational movement of the armed forces.

As regards the features of Howeize armored vehicle, Vahidi said that in addition to different military missions, the vehicle can be used at border posts and in anti-narcotic operations.

The Iranian Armed Forces have recently test-fired different types of newly-developed missiles and torpedoes and tested a large number of home-made weapons, tools and equipments during massive military drills.

Defense analysts and military observers say that Iran's wargames and its advancements in weapons production have proved as a deterrent factor, specially at a time of heightened threats by the US.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106242182>

- **Iran, Lebanon Discuss Expansion of Industrial Cooperation**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Ambassador to Beirut Qazanfar Roknabadi in a meeting with Lebanese Minister of Industry Freij Sabounjian conferred on ways to further develop industrial relations and cooperation between the two countries.

During the meeting, Roknabadi underlined the necessity for the implementation of industrial cooperation agreements between the two countries, and voiced

Iran's readiness to design and build industrial towns in Lebanon.

Sabounjian, for his part, stressed Lebanon's enthusiasm for cooperation with Iranian companies in implementing industrial projects, and said, "The Lebanese side will use the experiences of Iranian companies in designing industrial towns."

Iran and Lebanon enjoy cordial relations and have further expanded these ties in recent years.

The two sides have exchanged several delegations of high-ranking officials in the last three years.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad paid a landmark visit to Beirut in October 2010. The two countries signed a cluster of economic agreements during President Ahmadinejad's visit.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106242184>

- **'Iran has offered to halt 20 percent enrichment if sanctions lifted'**

TEHRAN, Sept. 26 (MNA) – Iran has offered to stop enriching uranium to a purity level of 20 percent if the West lifts sanctions against Tehran, Iran's ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency says.

Iran started producing uranium to 20 percent after it could not obtain fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor from the international market due to the sanctions imposed against the country.

Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh said the offer was made once again in an informal meeting between Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili and European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in Istanbul on September 18.

Ashton leads the major powers (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany) in nuclear negotiations with Iran.

"We are prepared to suspend enrichment to 20 percent, provided we find a reciprocal step compatible with it," Soltanieh said in an interview with the Inter Press Service News Agency published on Monday.

“We said this in Istanbul,” he added. “If we do that there shouldn’t be sanctions.”

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1705414>

- **35 U.S. bases within range of Iranian missiles: IRGC provincial commander**

SEM NAN, Sept. 25 (MNA) -- Thirty-five U.S. military bases are within the range of Iran’s missiles, according to the commander of Islamic Revolution Guards Corps forces in Semnan Province.

Brigadier General Ali Ostad Hosseini made the remarks in Semnan city, the provincial capital, on Tuesday.

He went on to say that the Iranian armed forces have received good training in air, space, and sea defense activities and have been organized to defend the country

The United States has shown that it only prioritizes its own interests in its dealings with other nations, he added.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1705217>

- **Oil Ministry dismisses claim NIOC is linked to IRGC**

TEHRAN, Sept. 25 (MNA) – The Iranian Oil Ministry denied on Tuesday a claim by the U.S. Treasury that the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) is linked to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC).

"We strongly deny these false allegations," said Alireza Nikzad-Rahbar, a spokesman for the ministry, told the Mehr News Agency.

In a statement on Monday, the U.S. Treasury claimed the NIOC was an "agent or affiliate" of the IRGC, and cited the appointment of Rostam Qasemi as oil minister in 2011 as a reason for its claim.

Qasemi was a former commander of Khatam al-Anbia, the IRGC’s engineering and construction wing.

Nikzad-Rahbar said Qasemi no longer had any connection to Khatam al-Anbia.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1705240>

- **‘Iran being wrongfully accused by nuclear-armed parties’**

Iran says it is being wrongfully accused of pursuing a military nuclear program by parties who themselves have stockpiles brimming with nuclear weapons.

Referring to the allegations, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told a group of media executives in New York on Monday, “Those who raise the claim...today have stockpiles full of nuclear weapons.”

“This is while if they are concerned about the international security, they should eliminate their bombs,” he added.



The US and Israel have repeatedly threatened to take military action against Iran in order to force the Islamic Republic to halt its uranium enrichment program,

which Washington and Tel Aviv claim includes a military component.

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 the Islamic Republic's civilian nuclear program has been diverted to nuclear weapons production.

Referring to the United States losing “valuable opportunities” to discuss the matter with the Islamic Republic, Ahmadinejad said, “Today, Iran's nuclear case has lost its legal and technical aspects turning into a political one and one characterized by [the US] obstinacy.”

“[The US] cannot create any new opportunities for itself through [wrongful] persistence and obstinacy [now either].”

He reiterated that Tehran is not after nuclear weapons and said, "Currently [as before], Iran's nuclear activities are [being carried out] under the IAEA supervision and this [supervision] can continue."

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/26/263605/iran-to-accusers-dont-preach-disarm/>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Growing Hamas friction: Meshaal reaffirms decision to relinquish leadership**

Hamas officials in Gaza, outside Palestinian territories say Meshaal is determined to give up political bureau leadership.

GAZA CITY (Palestinian Territories) - Khaled Meshaal, the head of the Hamas movement, has reaffirmed his decision to relinquish leadership of the group, Hamas officials said on Tuesday.

The movement in January announced its longtime leader-in-exile was ready to step down from his post, but said members were hoping he would reconsider his decision.

But Hamas officials in Gaza and outside the Palestinian territories said Tuesday that Meshaal was determined to give up the leadership.

"It seems that Abu al-Walid (Meshaal) has taken the decision not to stand again as a candidate for the head of the political bureau of the movement," a Hamas member in Gaza said on condition of anonymity.

"That's what he told members of the political bureau and the leadership during a meeting in Cairo this month."

The comments confirmed a posting on the official Facebook page of Izzat al-Rishq, another senior Hamas leader in exile.

"During the last meeting of the political bureau of the movement, which included leaders inside and in exile, and as leadership elections approach, brother Khaled Meshaal reiterated his wish not to accept candidacy for the head of the political bureau," he wrote.

"Although leaders and key figures from the movement inside (the Palestinian

territories) and outside called on brother Abu al-Walid to continue to lead the movement, he stuck to his position and offered his thanks to the movement's leaders and members."

Meshaal's departure comes after growing friction between the leadership-in-exile, formally based in Damascus but dispersed since the Syrian uprising began, and the leadership on the ground in the Gaza Strip.

Since taking control of the coastal strip, the Hamas movement in Gaza has boosted its profile, growing increasingly financially independent but also openly disagreeing with decisions taken by the leadership-in-exile.



Meshaal was publicly criticised by Hamas members inside Gaza during his bid to cement a now-stalled reconciliation

process between the Islamist movement and the rival Fatah movement headed by Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas.

And the Gaza Hamas official said that it was "time that the head of the movement be inside, and on Palestinian soil."

"The balance of forces on the ground has been affected by political developments in the region and the world," he added.

A Hamas official in exile acknowledged that Meshaal has faced "difficulties with certain leaders in Gaza," particularly over the reconciliation process, though he added that "these obstacles will be overcome."

Hamas said in January that Meshaal would remain active "in the service of the people, the movement and the Palestinian cause."

The political bureau is Hamas's principal decision-making body and its members are elected by secret ballot by the much larger consultative council.

Among the leading candidates to replace Meshaal are his number two, Mussa Abu

Marzuq, who also lives in exile; the leader of the Hamas government in Gaza, Ismail Haniya, and another prominent Gaza Hamas figure, Mahmud Zahar.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54562>

- **Hamas leader: Abbas should end security coordination with Israel**

CAIRO (Ma'an) -- The deputy head of Hamas on Tuesday urged President Mahmoud Abbas to put an end to security coordination with Israel.

Cairo-based Moussa Abu Marzouk said that "If I were in Abu Mazen's place, I would put an end to security coordination with Israel, which enabled settlers to swallow Palestinian lands while we stood watching them."

In an interview, Abu Marzouk added that "I would also re-examine the Paris Protocol, making sure the Palestinian economy is not subordinate to the Israeli economy, but rather supported by Arab countries."

He added: "The economic conditions in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem were much better before Oslo."

Commenting on a proposal by Israel's defense minister to unilaterally disengage from the occupied West Bank, Abu Marzouk said that such a plan "is nothing new."

"Israel has generally ended the two-state solution and stopped negotiations. They want to unilaterally disengage from the West Bank leaving very small areas for the Palestinian people, and these areas will remain under Israeli control," Abu Marzouk said.

Ehud Barak told the newspaper Israel Hayom that in the absence of peace talks, smaller illegal settlements should be evacuated, with the major settlement blocs remaining under Israeli control.

Abu Marzouk said that Israel had essentially cancelled the Oslo agreement, leaving only the parts which are beneficial to Israel such as security coordination and the Paris Protocol.

“The PA does not want to think of any other options either of their own choice, or imposed from outside. They seem to like their positions and they don’t want to leave these positions.

“Otherwise, what does it mean to freeze negotiations -- all this with Israel showing no commitment at all to the Oslo agreement while the Palestinians are committed to all agreements?”

Those who signed Oslo a decade ago do not want to admit they made mistakes with these agreements, neither do they want to correct their mistakes, he added.

“What worries me about the cancelation of Oslo is that the occupation of the Gaza Strip legally comes to an end, then occupation is practically maintained in the West Bank.”

With regard to a proposed peace plan introduced by the Israeli party Meretz, Abu Marzouk said he could not take any proposals coming from outside the ruling coalition in Israel seriously.

“It is either an ideological proposal or propaganda,” he said.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=523544>

- **Qatar pledges millions in aid for Gaza rebuilding**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- Qatar is planning to provide half a billion dollars in assistance to the Gaza Strip over the coming three years to rebuild infrastructure destroyed in Israeli attacks.



In a visit to the enclave Tuesday, Qatari ambassador Muhammad al-Imadi said the Gulf country's emir created a special committee to distribute some \$450 million for infrastructure, development and education projects.

The committee has already started consultations with Palestinian officials, he said.

Ismail Haniyeh, the prime minister of the Hamas-led government in Gaza, thanked Qatar for its position on the 2008-2009 Cast Lead operation and against the blockade.

He also applauded Qatar's efforts to reconstruct buildings destroyed in the assault. "Qatar has always been the first country in supporting the Palestinian cause," he said.

Haniyeh also said that the projects would provide thousands of job opportunities, and he promised to provide all the needed facilities to implement these projects.

During Cast Lead some 3,500 homes were completely destroyed, UN agencies say.

Rebuilding efforts have been hampered by Israel's blockade on the Gaza Strip, which has limited the import of construction materials.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=523487>

- **British Consulate General Supports Private Sector in East Jerusalem**

JERUSALEM, September 25, 2012 (WAFA) - The British Consulate in Jerusalem and the UK for Trade and Investment organized on Tuesday a business road show in London for a number of leading businessmen from the City of Jerusalem to support the private sector development in East Jerusalem and the business community there, according to a press release by the British consulate General.

The Jerusalemite businessmen met with the business community in London and briefed them on a new business initiative, Jerusalem Business Forum, which will take place in November this year.

The coming Forum aims to develop new business strategies for East Jerusalem and revive investment in the city. The participants also presented to potential British investors the primary objectives of the Forum, which include development plans in the sectors of tourism, education, real estate, equity and venture capital funds and service including finance, and trade.

British Consul General in Jerusalem said, "East Jerusalem matters in so many ways – not least economically. Its people need

and deserve more jobs, better infrastructure, and more business opportunity. I believe that investing in East Jerusalem also makes sound commercial sense in terms of the likely return on that investment. So we are glad to support private sector development in East Jerusalem. The London road show is a great opportunity to connect the business community in East Jerusalem with potential investors from the United Kingdom. We hope it will create sustainable economic links leading to business growth and jobs for the people of East Jerusalem.”

The road show is hosted by the Business Council and the Portland Trust, Middle East Association, and Arab British Chamber of Commerce.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20741>

- **Security forces on high alert as Israel marks Yom Kippur**

By JPOST.COM STAFF

Full closure on West Bank in place until after Day of Atonement ends; large police

forces deployed in Jerusalem; train and bus services ceased.

Security and rescue forces were on high alert and deployed in large numbers in Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank for Yom Kippur, which begins Tuesday afternoon and ends Wednesday at dusk.

Ahead of the holiday, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz ordered a 48-hour closure of West Bank and Gaza Strip border crossings beginning Monday at 11:59pm and continuing until Wednesday at 11:59pm, the IDF Spokesman's Office said Monday.

Exceptions to the closure will be made for humanitarian and medical emergencies as authorized by the Civil Administration, according to the IDF.

The IDF stated that it would "continue to defend the citizens of Israel, while taking into consideration the Palestinians' quality of life."

Train services throughout the country ended at 11:00 a.m and will resume at midnight Wednesday. Egged bus services

stopped running at 2:00 p.m. Bus services will resume on Wednesday.

As occurs every year, streets and highways across the country are also empty of private traffic in observance of Yom Kippur.

The fast will begin at 4:57 p.m in Jerusalem, 5:11 p.m in Tel Aviv, 5:02 p.m. in Haifa and 5:14 in Beersheba, and will last 25 hours.

The fast will end at 6:07 p.m. in Jerusalem, 6:09 in Tel Aviv and Beersheba and 6:08 in Haifa.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=286216>

- **Syria mortar shells hit Golan Heights; none injured**



Several mortar shells fired from Syrian territory fell inside the Golan Heights on Tuesday, marking the first time the ongoing violence in Syria has spilled inside Israel's borders.

There were no reports of injuries or damage as a result of the incident.

Related:

'Hezbollah aiming 60-70 thousand rockets at Israel'

Israel has filed a complaint with the United Nations forces operating in the area, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF.)

The mortar shells were "aimed at villages inside Syria and are part of the internal, ongoing conflict in Syria," said the IDF Spokesman's Office following the incident.

The IDF also warned that "fire from Syria leaking into Israel will not be accepted."

Israel has prepared contingency plans over the possibility that violence in Syria, where rebels are fighting to overthrow President Bashar Assad, could reach Israeli territory. Last Wednesday, the IDF held a

surprise large-scale drill in the Golan, the scope of which had not been held in the region for several years.

The drill saw Artillery Corps conscripts and officers who were performing ordinary patrol activity in the West Bank airlifted in helicopters without prior warning to their artillery pieces' firing positions in the Golan. Hours later they took part in live artillery-fire exercises.

The drill came on the heels of a major Golani Brigade infantry and Armored Corps exercise, held in the Golan in recent weeks, that simulated combat with Hezbollah.

The IDF said Wednesday's drill had been planned well in advance and should not be linked with any current developments.

It did, however coincide with ongoing concerns over instability in Syria and the fate of chemical weapons there.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=286203>

- **PLO ambassador calls on UN to recognize Palestine**

By TOVAH LAZAROFF

Ibrahim Khraishi addresses UNHRC for Palestine to become "fully fledged member state," accuses Israel of violations.

PLO ambassador to the UN in Geneva Ibrahim Khraishi on Monday called on the United Nations to accept Palestine as a member state, as he spoke at the 21st session of that body's Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"The Palestinian people very soon are due to meet the dawn of their freedom," Khraishi said. "The occupying force must take into account this reality. We are going to stay on Palestinian land."

Related:

September: Time for High Holy Days, PA statehood bid

He added, "We are confident that our state will be set up [as] a fully fledged member of the UN."

He spoke in advance of a renewed bid by the PLO to advance the cause of unilateral Palestinian statehood at the UN, by

pushing for the General Assembly to recognize it as a non-member state.

He was one of dozens of representatives who spoke in support of the Palestinians and against Israel, as the UNHRC held a debate under Agenda Item 7, which mandates that the issue of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians be debated at each session.

Although countries took Israel to task for its continued "occupation" of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with sharp rhetoric, the council did not pass any resolutions against Israel.

The council has been heavily criticized for overly focusing on Israel, and in past sessions has often approved more resolutions against Israel than against any other country.

Khraishi accused Israel of violating international law and humanitarian law in its treatment of Palestinians.

"Occupation is the main cause of the suffering of the Palestinian people," he declared, adding, "The Judaization of east Jerusalem is continuing."

He further accused Israel of continued settlement-building in the West Bank, of holding Palestinians prisoner in its jails and of not halting settler violence.

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Kyung-wha-Kang also took Israel to task for not doing enough to halt settler violence.

"There is a need to ensure accountability for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. This includes bringing to justice Israeli settlers who perpetrate violence against Palestinians and their property," she said.

She added that her office welcomed assurances from Israel's public security minister that the police would address these "nationalistic hate crimes."

"We look forward to immediate and effective action by Israeli authorities to prevent, investigate and punish any incident of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians or their property," she said.

Kang also argued that Israel and the Palestinians needed to do more to implement a report penned by South African jurist Richard Goldstone on Israel's incursion into Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009, known as Operation Cast Lead.

"It has been nearly three years since this council endorsed the fact-finding mission's recommendations. Yet not one person has been indicted for any of the incidents documented by the fact-finding mission," she said.

Israel, which has cut off ties with the council, was not present.

The United States did not address the council.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=286186>

#### 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Just do it again, Libya**

By Raphael Thelen

God, was I nervous when I went to Libya the first time. It was just after the vigilante-style murder of Moammar Qaddafi, and the news was full of horror stories: Armed militias roaming the countryside, tribes tearing the country apart, Libya becoming the next Somalia.

Shoes carefully tied, ready to run, all senses on high alert, I ventured out and found Tripoli running as usual. Street vendors offered vegetables, cafes sold little Macciatos, and people strolled down the wide streets. I gazed at the Italian colonial architecture and wondered if I was missing out on something.

Sure, you could find them, the armed militias. But instead of plunging the country into a new civil war, they were busy doing donuts with their captured Toyota Land Cruisers, machine guns mounted on top. But just behind them, you could see families having picnics on the little grass patches, BBQs smoking.

The only real and immediate concern was the bullets raining from the sky from the militias' celebratory firing. Scores of people had been killed this way in the weeks before. But the Libyan people

answered in a way that left one of my most enduring impressions of the country.

Civil society groups started numerous campaigns against random shooting, putting up posters, staging demonstrations. And it worked. Within days you could get a whole night's sleep. No more gun shots echoing through the streets.

When the US ambassador to Libya, Chris Stevens, was killed on September 11 in an attack by an armed Islamist militia, it was a shock to many. Was religious extremism taking over the country as it had done elsewhere in the Middle East, something so many Western commentators fretted?

During a visit to Benghazi in February I again saw the opposite. Young people were founding radio stations that played American pop music. People of all professions were writing party programs for the first parliamentary elections. A common refrain was: "We do not want religious parties to tell us what to believe. My religion is between me and God."

And so in response to the embassy attack, the people of Libya again made their

point. On Friday they organized a "Save Benghazi" protest. Over 30,000 people showed up. They chased the Islamist militias out of the city, thereby enabling the nascent government to consolidate its control.

"Civil society in Benghazi has always been very progressive," Claudia Gazzini, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, told me. "And in recent months they have more and more tried to oppose the increasingly public stance of the Islamist militias."

Libya had done it again. It defied all stereotypes and predictions. The doom and gloom camp was once more proven wrong.

Surely, Libya has not yet turned the corner. There are still armed militias, the government is weak, and Qaddafi supporters still lurk in some parts of the country. But by focusing on these issues, one misses out on too much to understand Libya's politics and society.

The ongoing struggle between Islamists and their opponents in Benghazi offers two insights into the situation there. For

one, the majority of the people oppose the Islamization of the country. And second, it is not weapons that dominate Libyan politics. It is the partly organized, partly spontaneous will of the people.

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

- **Libyan leader says attack unrelated to anti-Islam film**

Libyan leader Mohamed al-Megaryef said Wednesday that the deadly September 11 attack on the US consulate was a pre-planned assault that had "nothing to do with" an anti-Islam online video.

In an interview with NBC News, Megaryef said the attackers fired rocket-propelled grenades and mortar rounds with such accuracy that the attack had to have been planned and carried out by experienced militants.

When asked if the offensive anti-Islam movie – which sparked violent protests across the Muslim world – had anything to do with the assault, Megaryef replied: "Not on this attack."

"Reaction should have been, if it was genuine, should have been six months earlier. So it was postponed until the 11th of September," he said in an interview conducted in English.

"They chose this date, 11th of September, to carry a certain message."

The attack on the consulate, which killed US ambassador Chris Stevens and four other Americans, was initially said to have been part of a protest over the film, but the White House later called it a "terrorist attack."

Megaryef told NBC there were no protesters at the consulate before the attack, which he said came in two waves – with militants firing grenades at the consulate and then attacking an annex with mortar rounds.

"It's a pre-planned act of terrorism," he said, adding that the film had "nothing to do with this attack."

Libyan officials were quick to condemn the attack and have vowed to help the United States bring the perpetrators to justice.

Libya's newly elected government is struggling to rein in the patchwork of local militias – some led by hardline Islamists – that emerged during last year's uprising, which toppled longtime dictator Moammer Qaddafi.

US officials have said Al-Qaeda may have been behind the consulate assault, which took place on the 11th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

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

- **Egypt will embrace non-Muslims, women, says Morsi**

The rights of non-Muslims and women were safe in Egypt, President Mohamed Morsi said Tuesday, repeatedly telling a US audience that the newly democratic country will remain a secular state.

"All Egyptians represent the majority, all Egyptians - men, women, Muslims, and Christians... regardless of their beliefs, their gender, their color," Morsi said at the Clinton Global Initiative forum in New York.

Morsi, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood movement who was elected following Egypt's revolution against US-backed strongman Hosni Mubarak, told the forum led by former president Bill Clinton that Egypt will remain pluralistic and secular.

"We have really a new democratic state and a new real civilian state in Egypt: non-theocratic, not military," he said.

Morsi dismissed worries by some outside Egypt that civil and religious rights, including for the Coptic Christian minority, were likely to decline with the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. He said the real problem in Egypt was Mubarak-era corruption.

"We don't have a real problem in terms of the rights of women," he said. "However, the corruption is something everybody suffered from."

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

- **Suspected Islamists charged over Egypt student murder**

An Egyptian court on Tuesday sentenced three suspected radical Islamists to 15 years in prison for the murder of a young man sitting in a park with a girl, the official news agency MENA reported.

A trial in the northeastern town of Suez that was heavily guarded by police ruled that the men were complicit in the killing of local engineering student Ahmad Hussein Eid, MENA said.

The prosecution charged that they had formed a vigilante group to attack people not adhering to their own religious principals but the three men denied the accusation.

The men had reportedly approached Eid and a young woman and berated them for being together in the park without being married. A fight broke out during which Eid was grievously wounded. He later died in hospital.

The episode has stirred up an emotional reaction in Egypt, with people fearing the emergence of self-proclaimed vigilante groups policing moral values.

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

- **Armed militias a danger to Libya's future**

Critics say Libya's failure to disband all militias may backfire as armed groups might become military wings of political factions.

By Dominique Soguel - BENGHAZI, Libya

Militias have weapons and power to pressure the government

Libya's new leadership, under huge pressure from the street, has taken steps to tackle militias, but critics warn its decision to only disband some armed groups is dangerous and may backfire.

In the wake of massive anti-militia protests and violence in the eastern city of Benghazi, the authorities ordered "illegitimate" brigades be broken up but also warned demonstrators against targeting "legitimate" ones.

That distinction has ruffled feathers in Benghazi where tens of thousands of people marched on Friday for the

dissolution of all armed groups and the establishment of a professional army and police force.

"Since Mohammed al-Megaryef divided them into legitimate and illegitimate brigades, everyone has been able to claim they are legitimate," warns analyst Fathi al-Baaja, referring to the head of the General National Congress (GNC).

Baaja, a political science professor, says the danger of making such a distinction and not banning all brigades is that major armed groups might become the "military wings of political factions."

"We will have many armies inside the army and that will be very dangerous," Baaja adds, stressing that what the oil-rich country needs is a national army where people join as individuals, rather than as groups.

Many in Benghazi fault the authorities for keeping intact the brigades that emerged in the 2011 revolt that toppled Moamer Gathafi, and for standing by Islamist brigades such as Libya Shield, February 17, and Raf Allah al-Sahati.

"These groups are not legitimate," says Baaja. "They are not part of the army. They didn't enroll. They have no ranks. Who gave them the legitimacy?"

Miftah Buzeid, editor of Benghazi's Barniq newspaper, agrees.

"We don't want to repeat the Lebanese scenario where the army is weak; where Hezbollah is stronger than the army," he says.

Buzeid says Benghazi rose up against all armed groups, which cover the spectrum of Islamist ideology, because they see them as the "military wings of political factions in the GNC," a legislative assembly elected in July.

The GNC this month voted for Mustafa Abu Shagur as prime minister but he has yet to form his government. Both analysts predict top posts will go to Islamists who gave him a narrow victory over liberal candidate Mahmud Jibril.

The most pressing challenge for the new authorities is to disband brigades that are well-armed and who believe their legitimacy, forged on the front line,

predates and supersedes that of a government elected by the people.

'Arms to pressure government'

"They have weapons and power to pressure the government," notes Buzeid.

The second challenge, he adds, is dealing with an empowered and impatient population: "The street will take the initiative and not wait for the GNC."

A case in point is the crowd that drove out two Salafist brigades, Martyrs of Abu Slim and Ansar al-Sharia, before clashing with a third, Raf Allah al-Sahati, the only one the government claims as its own.

Megaryef decided to disband rogue militias and put army officers at the head of state-sanctioned brigades in response to Friday's revolt and the deadly September 11 attack on the US consulate in Benghazi.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have long warned that militias have become a law unto themselves, detaining people and carrying out torture with impunity.

Such practices coupled with rising extremism -- evident in anti-Western attacks, the desecration of Sufi mausoleums and Christian graves, and assassinations -- turned the population against them, says Buzeid.

Mustafa Sagizli, head of the veterans affairs committee, believes this backlash against former rebels also marks the government's failure to "provide the means for peaceful and positive demobilisation."

He warns that pushing small but radical groups into hiding, such as Ansar al-Sharia which was kicked out of Benghazi by protesters but held on to its weapons, is a huge mistake because it will "only make them more extreme."

Brigade leaders and fighters, meanwhile, argue that if they step out of the picture there will be a security vacuum and insist it was they who fought Kadhafi, secured the elections, and are deployed when crises arise.

Many say they are unwilling to disband and join the police or army before these

institutions are revamped and purged of elements who were loyal to slain leader Kadhafi.

"It is like asking the guard to work together with the prisoner," points out activist Jalal al-Gallal, adding that a proposal to form a body akin to the American national guard to absorb former fighters is gaining traction.

Part of the problem is that the previous transitional government, lacking ballot-box legitimacy, shied away from confronting brigades and sought to appease them through reward schemes that were later halted due to corruption.

They also entrenched their power, analysts say.

Libya Shield is now the nascent army's main striking force and the interior ministry's Supreme Security Committee has taken on the role of police on the streets of Benghazi and Tripoli, Buzeid notes.

Ahmed Majbari, deputy of the revolutionary forces union, sums up a common view among ex-rebels who

refuse to go home: "The army fought us on the front line and the police killed us on the streets. How can we come under them?"

"The revolution is on until its goals are achieved, then we will go home. If they start rebuilding the country without cleaning the institutions then we rose up for nothing, our martyrs died in vain," says Majbari.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54573>

- **Protests continue in Cairo, governorates**

Protests continued on Tuesday in Cairo and five other governorates for demands including better living conditions, higher salaries, and the release of Egyptians detained in Libya.

Outside the Cabinet building in Cairo, nearly 200 drivers protested the installments payment system for their white taxis, which they operate as part of a government scheme introduced in 2009 to replace their older taxis with cleaner and more fuel-efficient vehicles. The

drivers complain that the government bought their old cars for cheap returns.



Altercations took place between passers-by and drivers who blocked traffic on Qasr al-Aini Street.

At a different protest, a number of relatives of Egyptians detained in Libya demonstrated outside the Foreign Ministry in Cairo to demand intervention for their release.

In Minya, Upper Egypt, residents of Talla village demanded that they be provided with a sanitary drainage service. Some residents also staged protests demanding public housing. In Assiut, also in Upper Egypt, tens of peasants protested outside the governorate's office over soaring rental costs for agricultural lands.

Meanwhile, administrative university workers continued their strikes at the universities of Alexandria, Zagazig and Suez over financial demands which include better salaries and equality with teaching staff.

Nurses and technicians at several university hospitals continued striking for the eighth day in a row, also demanding better working conditions.

In Hurghada, Russian-speaking tour guides went on strike, protesting the appointment of foreigners in their place. There were also protests in Damanhour, where employees at the blood bank are demanding the dismissal of the director.

Meanwhile in Suez, bus drivers went on strike, demanding police protection against repeated attacks by thugs.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/protests-continue-cairo-governorates>

- **Sheikhs and the ballot box: Internal rifts emerge within Salafi Nour Party**

Noha El-Hennawy

Once again Salafis are making headlines, not with incendiary statements, but because of internal rivalries that may threaten their most influential party.

The Nour Party, the largest Salafi political organization, has been recently racked by internal splits that exposed the stand-off between religious and political leaders. Two blocs are believed to be evolving. The first is apparently led by Sheikh Yasser Borhamy, the vice-president of the party's mother organization, the Salafi Dawah, and the second is spearheaded by Nour's president Emad Abdel Ghafour, who is widely hailed in Salafi circles as a democratic figure.

The feud, unfolding ahead of forthcoming parliamentary elections, raises questions about the future of a party that surprised observers, emerging as the second most powerful electoral force in the country.

#### An overdue standoff

Internal elections have recently blown the lid off a dormant dispute between the party's two factions. Last month, several party members and leaders from the Delta province of Gharbiya tendered their

resignation in objection to the polls that they described as flawed.

Faced with an increasing number of complaints, Abdel Ghafour decided to suspend the internal poll. Some contended that the vote was marred by violations aimed at ensuring the victory of candidates with close ties to Salafi Dawah's preachers, including Borhamy.

However, the party's executive council refused Abdel Ghafour's decision and insisted that elections be held. To contain the situation, the Salafi Dawah assigned one of its popular religious leaders to mediate between the two factions.

Meanwhile, a group of angry party members who support the party president's decision established the Internal Reform Front (IRF) in early September to push for an overhaul of the party to liberate politicians from what they see as clerical control.

Mahmoud Abbas, a middle-ranking leader based in Alexandria and a founder of the front, told Egypt Independent that his bloc seeks to reverse the policies implemented by religious leaders over the last eight

months. Abbas alleged that Borhamy used his leverage to place loyal figures in key party positions.

“Borhamy trusts people who follow his orders,” said Abbas, who claims his IRF has attracted at least 500 Nour members so far.

“In the last eight months, we were trying to explain that what is happening does not serve the party. Whoever spoke about it was either sacked or pressured to shut up. Only a few shut up, but many resigned and many others were sacked,” he continued.

The IRF demands the postponement of party elections until after parliamentary elections, and the dissolution of the party's executive council and the membership committee, both of which the front alleges are controlled by sheikhs.

Younes Makhyoun, a member of the executive committee dismissed Abbas's comments and denied the existence of an opposition bloc under the latter's leadership. “[Abbas] represents no one but himself and there is nothing called the Internal Reform Front,” he said.

He also downplayed the recent feud, arguing that it is a “mere administrative disagreement” over the date of internal elections.

#### Clerical origins

The Salafi Dawah, one of the best-organized Salafi groups in Egypt today, was originally established by students at Alexandria University in the 1970s to promote ultra-orthodox Islam. The Dawah's preachers have propagated their message through lessons in mosques, conferences, youth activities and social services. Since the 1990s, many of its preachers became TV stars when their programs were regularly aired on Salafi satellite channels.

For decades, the movement remained aloof from politics and even went as far as denouncing political participation.

But, in the summer of last year, the Dawah's political wing, the Nour Party was granted official status. A few months later, the party had taken the nation by surprise: it had captured almost 25 percent of parliamentary seats, becoming the second

largest bloc after the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice party.

According to Ahmed Zaghloul, an expert on Salafi groups, recent disputes are the manifestation of an inherent tension between the party's political and religious wings.

“It is the conflict between the sheikh and the politician,” said Zaghloul. This tension has remained unresolved since the founding of the party.

“The majority of the Nour executive council are sheikhs and members in the Salafi Dawah's Shura Council. In most provinces, the leader of the Salafi Dawah is the general-secretary of the party,” he added, saying that the structural overlap had led two distinct functions becoming conflated.

For most experts on Islamist organizations, this blend of proselytizing and political activity prevents Islamists from taking stances that correspond to real political concerns, rather than dogma.

For Zaghloul, the expulsion of the party's first spokesperson, Mohamed Yosry, last

year was the first manifestation of the tension in the party.

In 2011, Yosry told the press that he had resigned from the party without explaining why. However, Zaghloul's new book, “Islamists and the Revolution” says that Yosry was sacked after he praised Nobel Laureate Naguib Mahfouz. His statement elicited controversy among Salafi clerics, who had always alleged Mahfouz's novels contradicted Islam.

“One cannot condone the wrong,” Borhamy had reportedly then said in reference to Yosry's comments about Mahfouz.

This is not to say that there are major ideological differences between the politician and the sheikh, according to Zaghloul. He said the differences are rather over implementation, specifically whether party decisions should gain clerical approval.

Ashraf al-Sherif, a political scientist at the American University in Cairo, added that Borhamy's camp wants to empower only “people of trust” while the second camp

of Abdel Ghafour seeks to democratize the party.

“Abdel Ghafour wants the party to open up to different internal trends,” said Sherif, an expert on Islamist groups.

Like the Salafi Dawah, the Nour Party derives its ideological foundations from puritanical schools of Islamic jurisprudence, particularly Wahhabism. For a long time, Dawah preachers had rejected democracy as a western heretical invention. After the 2011 revolution, this attitude was revised and the Dawah and its party approved of a democracy that does “not contradict God's laws.”

For Islam Abdel Bary, a 32-year-old Alexandrian member of the Nour Party, the overlap between the Dawah and the party is a foregone conclusion.

“It is the Dawah that created the party,” he said. “The Nour Party benefited a lot from the Dawah's networks when it was created. Lay Salafis did not know Dr. Abdel Ghafour but they knew Salafi sheikhs.”

Abdel Bary contended that the recent conflict was provoked by Nour founders

who do not belong to the ranks of Salafi Dawah and seek a larger role for themselves within the party.

At the moment of the party's inception, Abdel Ghafour had invited Salafis from outside the Salafi Dawah to join his party, but there were not enough outsiders for them to have “the upper hand” within the party, argued Abdel Bary.

Turmoil at a crucial juncture

Internal tension within the Salafi movement has erupted at a critical moment as they roll up their sleeves for the upcoming parliamentary elections. It raises concerns that the group might disintegrate.

Sherif, the political scientist, acknowledged that the party faces “a big crisis” but he downplayed its potential impact.

“I do not think it threatens the very existence of the party,” said Sherif. “It is normal, it is a new party, it has a lot of members, its structures are not institutionalized enough, and it brings

together people of different backgrounds," he said.

"It is practically necessary for both factions to reach a compromise as elections are approaching and Nour leaders are already afraid of radical Salafi groups," added Sherif.

By "radical groups," Sherif refers primarily to the would-be party of Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, a former presidential hopeful who was excluded from the race due to his mother's dual citizenship, which violated his candidacy.

Abu Ismail had built a broad base of support thanks to his revolutionary discourse and unequivocal statements on the strict implementation of Sharia. His discourse was seen by experts as a source of embarrassment for less confrontational Salafi groups, especially the Nour Party.

According to Gamal Saber, a former spokesperson of Abu Ismail's presidential campaign, the latter is set to launch his party mid-October.

"Our goal is to implement Islamic Sharia and to achieve the highest level of

progress for the state," Saber told Egypt Independent. He said the party would run for all seats in the parliamentary polls.

"If Hazem establishes his party, he will take some of Nour's seats," said Zaghloul. "But the Nour Party will maintain its upper hand due to its presence on the street. It is socially very active thanks to the services it provides. Nour remains the strongest competitor to the Muslim Brotherhood."

"[However], Hazem is a product of Facebook and Salafi [TV] channels. He has no strong support base," said Zaghloul.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/sheikhs-and-ballot-box-internal-rifts-emerge-within-salafi-nour-party>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

### • Jordan to isolate unmarried Syria men after riots

Jordan's interior minister said on Tuesday the government was probing riots by angry Syrians at a refugee camp, and planning to isolate unmarried men to avoid more disturbances.

"Some Syrian refugees are currently being interrogated for taking part in the riots. They will be referred to courts," Ghaleb Zubi told state-run Petra news agency after a visit to the Zaatari refugee camp in northern Jordan.

"Unmarried men must separate from families at the camp to avoid more riots. Usually such problems are created by young men."

On Monday night, Jordanian anti-riot police were called in to quell a protest by Syrian refugees at their living conditions in Zaatari after they torched a tent and destroyed property.

"Jordan will not tolerate such acts," Zubi said.

In August, stone-throwing refugees injured more than 20 police in a protest over conditions at the UN-run camp, which houses more than 30,000 refugees, a week after Syrians clashed with warders who had prevented them from leaving.

Following the clashes, Prime Minister Fayeز Tarawneh said Jordan would send

home Syrian refugees who attacked police officers.

The refugees have repeatedly complained of bad living conditions at the camp, but Jordan, which says it is hosting more than 200,000 Syrians, complains of limited resources to cope with the growing influx.

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

- **Ambassador: Jordan welcomes Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- The Palestinian ambassador to Jordan on Tuesday denied reports that Amman was concerned Palestinian refugees who fled Syria would settle in Jordan.

High-ranking Jordanian officials told the London-based al-Hayat newspaper in early September that Jordan was concerned about an influx of Palestinian refugees in the country, and feared they would not return to Syria.

Atallah Khairi insisted that Amman had no such concerns. He said Palestinian refugees would return to Syria, and that some had already done so.



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He told Ma'an that Jordanian authorities respected all refugees, and the Jordanian people welcomed Palestinian refugees.

Human Rights Watch reported in July that Jordan had forcibly returned Palestinian refugees fleeing Syria and threatened to deport others. Palestinians had been arbitrarily detained on entering Jordan from Syria, and would not be released unless they agreed to return to Syria, the rights group said.

Palestinian refugees from Syria are housed in "Cyber City," separate from Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Khairi said the number of Palestinian refugees in Cyber City had fallen from 160 to 140, and that the Palestinian embassy had brought them food in coordination with Jordanian authorities.

The Jerusalem Post reported Thursday that Palestinian refugees who fled Syria to Jordan had written to the Palestinian Authority to complain that the embassy in Amman was refusing to assist them.

Khairi said that following reports of complaints, the embassy formed a committee in coordination with Jordanian authorities to ensure the refugees received assistance, while President Mahmoud Abbas instructed the embassy to provide for their needs.

The embassy also asked the refugees to form a committee of representatives to communicate their needs, Khairi said, adding that five trucks of food aid donated by Palestinians in the West Bank would be distributed to the refugees.

Cyber City is a former school in al-Ramtha being used to house Palestinian refugees. Those who have relatives in Jordan are able to stay with them, provided they have a guarantor.

Khairi urged refugees in Cyber City not to seek asylum elsewhere, noting that

Palestinian refugees who fled Iraq were still struggling.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=523394>

- **Lebanese army raids arms depot in Rashaya**

The Lebanese army said in a statement on Wednesday that it raided a weapons depot near the town of Al-Bireh in Rashaya.

According to the statement, an army unit stormed the location on Tuesday after it had received intelligence information regarding an arms stash in the area.

The depot contained rifles, hand grenades and ammunition, in addition to military and communication equipment, the army said.

It added that it apprehended three persons in connection with the case.

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

- **Syrian gunfire kills Lebanese citizen, injures another**

A Lebanese citizen in the Beqaa town of Ham, along the border with Syria, was killed by Syrian gunfire at 1 a.m. on Wednesday while his brother was severely injured, the National News Agency reported.

The 45-year-old who was shot dead was identified as Abdullah Mrad, the NNA said, adding that his brother – Mamdouh – was transferred to Baalbek’s Dar al-Amal hospital.

Government forces cracking down on an 18-month uprising in Syria have opened fire several times into neighboring Lebanon.

In previous shootings, Syrian forces have said they were targeting armed rebels and people crossing illegally from Lebanon into the strife-torn country.

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

- **Bassil: Forming oil committee similar to a puzzle**

Energy Minister Gebran Bassil said in remarks published on Wednesday that forming a management committee for oil exploration in Lebanon was like putting the pieces of a puzzle together.

"It is not enough to have six candidates to [assign] in this committee according to the sectarian quota, but there is a need for [harmony] to be present among the puzzle pieces. Each [person] must be assigned in the right place," Bassil told As-Safir newspaper.

The energy minister also said that the concerned parties submitted a list of candidates, adding that this was a "positive and useful" move.

"However, this is not enough. What is required is that suggestions are made while taking into consideration the sect and the specialty [of each candidate]," Bassil added.

The Parliament in August 2010 passed an oil exploration bill, which calls for the establishment of a treasury and a committee to oversee exploration and drilling off the coast of Lebanon.

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

- **Lebanon PM meets with Clinton in New York**

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Miqati on Tuesday discussed the latest developments with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, the National News Agency reported.

Miqati voiced his gratitude to the United States for its "efforts to distance Lebanon from the problems in the region."

"There is a consensus among the Lebanese parties to preserve the country's stability and distance it from the events [in the region]," the PM added.

In turn, the NNA reported that Clinton "urged the [Lebanese] cabinet to resolve the issue of its borders and begin exploiting its natural resources."

She also commended the Lebanese cabinet's role in "preserving stability and implementing the law."

She also commended the measures the cabinet took to protect the US embassy and American citizens in Beirut following protests that rocked the Arab world against an anti-Islam film.

The US Secretary of State thanked the Lebanese cabinet for its condemnation of the attacks on US embassies in Arab countries during protests against the film, which ridiculed the Prophet Mohammed.

The low-budget movie, "Innocence of Muslims," has sparked global protests and at least 30 people have died so far in unrest connected to the film in over 20 countries.

The movie, in which actors have strong American accents, portrays Muslims as immoral and gratuitously violent.

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

## 6. SYRIA

- **I will do my best to establish peace in Syria: Ahmadinejad**

TEHRAN, Sept. 26 (MNA) – President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has

attended the annual UN General Assembly meeting in New York, says he will do whatever in his power to bring an end to the 18-month conflict in Syria.

"I will do everything in my power to create stability, peace and understanding in Syria," Ahmadinejad told the Associated Press in an interview published on Wednesday.

Ahmadinejad also proposed forming a new group of 10 or 11 countries to work to end the war in the Arab country.

He said representatives of nations in the Middle East and elsewhere would meet in New York "very soon," to exchange views on Syria.

Earlier this month, Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi announced the formation of a four-member contact group with Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

On Saturday, Morsi said he could meet with top officials of the three states of the quartet during the UN General Assembly session in New York this week.

During a meeting in Cairo on September 17, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi proposed that observers from Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia be dispatched to the crisis-hit country.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1705479>

- **Brahimi says will visit Iran for Syria talks**

TEHRAN, Sept. 25 (MNA) – Lakhdar Brahimi, the new UN-Arab League joint special envoy on Syria, says he will visit Tehran in the near future for talks with Iranian officials on the crisis in Syria.

Brahimi made the announcement in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi in New York on Monday.

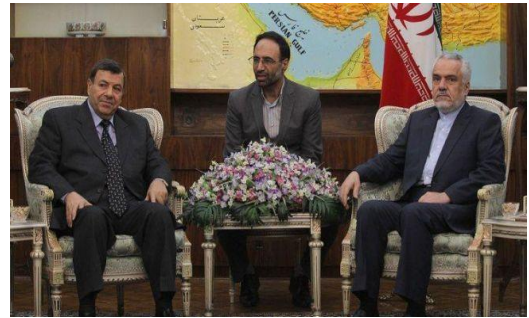
During the meeting, Brahimi emphasized the importance of holding consultations with Iran to help resolve the situation in Syria, the Tehran Times reported.

Salehi also said that Iran will support Brahimi throughout his mission.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1705253>

- **Syria will eventually conquer enemies, Iran VP says**

Syria has undoubtedly a bright future and will overcome its present difficulties."



Iranian First Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi says Syria will eventually triumph over its enemies.

Rahimi made the remarks during a meeting with visiting Syrian Parliament National Security Committee Chairman Mohammad Sobhi Abou al-Shamat in Tehran on Tuesday, IRNA reported.

"Syria has undoubtedly a bright future and will overcome its present difficulties," Rahimi noted.

He went on to say that the Zionists, who think they can create conflicts between "the followers of different religions by insulting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), are

unaware that Muslims love all of the prophets of God and the followers of divine religions.”

For his part, Abou al-Shamat said that Syria is on the same front with Iran in the campaign against oppression, adding that the Arab country “will get out of its present crisis” soon.

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

Western states have been calling for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down. However, Russia and China are strongly opposed to the Western drive to oust Assad.

The Syrian government says that the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the armed militants are foreign nationals, mostly from Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/25/263546/syria-will-eventually-conquer-enemies/>

- **Mass arrests in Syria's Baniyas, watchdog says**

Syrian forces have arrested at least 68 people, including three children, in a sweep of the coastal city of Baniyas led by Sunni Muslim officers loyal to the Alawite-dominated regime, a watchdog said Tuesday.

Twenty-five women were also among those detained in the massive operation, which was carried out during the past four days, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, adding the rest were men.

The Britain-based monitoring group called on the regime to release them.

"We warn the Syrian authorities that their continued detention will ignite popular rage and spark the sectarian conflict that the security forces have pushed for since the start of the revolt" in March last year, it said.

The campaign of arrests was led by three high-profile Sunni officers bent on proving

their loyalty to the embattled regime of President Bashar al-Assad, who belongs to the Alawite sect of Shiite Islam, the Observatory said.

Over the course of the 18-month conflict in Syria, some have warned the violence might take on a sectarian nature, in a country rich in religious and ethnic groups.

About 80 percent of Syria's population of almost 21 million people are Sunni, some 10 percent are Alawite, five percent Christian, three percent Druze and one percent Ismaili.

According to the Observatory, thousands of Syrians, including women and children, have been arbitrarily detained by the authorities during the conflict. Many have been tortured, others have been killed.

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

- **Qatar calls for Arab intervention in Syria**

Qatari emir urges no-fly zone to protect refugees, French President calls for UN to protect "liberated zones" under opposition control.

By Tim Witcher - UNITED NATIONS

The emir of Qatar has called for an Arab intervention in Syria and a no-fly zone to protect refugees as President Bashar al-Assad's forces stepped up the battle for Aleppo.

More than 100 civilians were killed Tuesday in intense fighting across Syria, activists said, as US President Barack Obama and other Western leaders at the UN General Assembly stepped up calls for an end to Assad's rule.

Qatar's emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, urged Arab action in the war-torn state because of the failure of the UN Security Council and other international efforts to end the 18-month-old conflict.

"It is better for Arab countries themselves to intervene out of their humanitarian, political and military duties and do what is necessary to stop the bloodshed," Sheikh Hamad told the General Assembly.

Earlier, Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani, told CNN

television that there was a "Plan B" for Syria.

"You need to make safe haven areas, first of all," he said. "That would require a no-fly zone.

"If the Syrians want to break that, that's another subject. We need somebody to have the teeth to tell them 'don't do that', because that will not be allowed."

French President Francois Hollande said the United Nations should protect "liberated zones" under opposition control to help civilians and refugees.

On the battlefield, government forces said they had retaken the Aleppo rebel district of Arkoub. Security forces were conducting door-to-door raids to hunt rebels, a military official said.

Syrian television aired footage of soldiers patrolling Arkoub, where high-rise buildings were shelled out and rubble lined the streets.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights insisted that clashes in Arkoub had not

ceased and an AFP correspondent heard machinegun fire in the area.

The observatory said at least 114 people had been killed. Activists say more than 29,000 have died since an uprising against Assad started in March 2011.

At the UN assembly, UN leader Ban Ki-moon called on the Security Council to "solidly and concretely" support the peace efforts of UN-Arab League peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who has stated there will be no quick solution.

The 15-nation council is hopelessly deadlocked, with Russia and China resisting international action on the war.

Obama, meanwhile, delivered a blistering attack on Assad in his speech to the UN assembly. "The future must not belong to a dictator who massacres his people," said the US president.

"As we meet here, we again declare that the regime of Bashar al-Assad must come to an end so that the suffering of the Syrian people can stop, and a new dawn can begin."



A State Department official later said that the United States is set to unveil more aid for the Syrian opposition this week, but stressed the supplies will still not include weapons or ammunition.

"We've been clear about our assistance and the type of assistance we are providing and that is going to continue," the official said, after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met peace envoy Brahimi.

Hollande joined the clamor for Assad to leave. "The Syrian regime will not retake its place in the concert of nations. It has no future among us," he told the assembly.

Aid agencies say there is a mounting humanitarian crisis with more than 2.5 million people now needing help in the country.

Save the Children released a poignant account of the suffering of Syrian children who are being "badly traumatized" after witnessing killing and experiencing torture.

The report "Untold Atrocities" gives first-hand accounts from children and parents who fled the violence, and contains graphic details of how youths have been caught up in the war.

Alongside its publication, explosions shook the headquarters of an army administration building in Damascus which manages schools for children and martyred soldiers. State media said seven people were wounded.

"The explosions were so powerful that the walls collapsed," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said.

Reports from the battlefield said, meanwhile, that regime defector Colonel Kassem Saadeddine, a Free Syrian Army commander in the central province of Homs, escaped an assassination attempt on Tuesday.

Saadeddine's convoy was ambushed by pro-regime militia in Salmiyeh, Hama province, free army spokesman Fahd al-Masri said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54571>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Qatar emir calls for Arab military intervention in Syria**

The emir of Qatar, a key backer of the Syrian opposition, on Tuesday called for an Arab military intervention in Syria to halt the conflict.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani told the UN General Assembly: "It is better for Arab countries themselves to intervene out of their humanitarian, political and military duties and do what is necessary to stop the bloodshed."

The emir cited the precedent of an Arab intervention force sent to Lebanon in 1976 in a bid to halt that country's civil war. He said it was "a step that proved to be effective and useful."

The Qatar leader is a fierce critic of President Bashar al-Assad whose government has accused Qatar and Saudi Arabia of arming Syrian rebels.

Al-Thani said the 18-month old Syrian conflict "has reached an unacceptable phase" with a government "that does not hesitate to use all sorts of weapons against its people."

He said intervention was needed because all efforts to "get Syria out of the cycle of killing" had been in vain and the UN Security Council has "failed" to take a stand.

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

- **Impoverished Yemen hopes for 'friends' aid at New York meeting**

Yemen is counting on donors to help it through delicate transition despite reported efforts to undermine process by ousted president and Qaeda.

By Taieb Mahjoub – DUBAI

Yemen, on the brink of economic collapse, is counting on donors to help it through a

delicate transition despite reported efforts to undermine the process by ousted president Ali Abdullah Saleh and Al-Qaeda.

President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, who is on his first tour of Western nations this week, said he would take part in the fourth "Friends of Yemen" meeting scheduled for Thursday in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

"We have high hopes for this meeting during which several donors will announce their financial commitments to help Yemen out of its ordeal," said Hadi.

At the last donor conference in Saudi Arabia on September 4, Yemen received \$6.4 billion in pledges, half of what it said was needed to revive its economy and rebuild infrastructure badly damaged during the 2011 uprising that ousted Saleh.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Saudi Arabia has already offered Yemen \$1.4 billion.

The kingdom deposited \$1 billion in Yemen's central bank, according to the

Yemeni minister for planning, Mohammed al-Saadi.

In total, Saudi has pledged \$3.6 billion in aid to Yemen.

"We hope that other Gulf states will follow suit and announce contributions in New York" to relieve the burden on their neighbour already "subject to financial pressures," a senior planning ministry official said this week.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official said Yemen has a "projected deficit of \$3 billion in a budget of about \$11 billion this year."

Meanwhile, an already dire humanitarian crisis in what is one of the Arab world's poorest countries has been exacerbated by political instability and conflict since Saleh's ouster in February after 33 years in power.

"Yemen is currently in the midst of a severe humanitarian crisis, with 10 million Yemenis -- almost half the population -- without enough food to eat," Oxfam said this week.

"Women and children are particularly being hit hard by the crisis," the international aid group added.

Seven months into Hadi's tenure, the country remains largely marred by unrest and conflict.

Al-Qaeda has taken advantage of a weak transitional government and the chaos of the uprising to bolster its power in the mostly lawless east and south.

It took a month-long army offensive in June to oust the militants from strongholds in the restive southern province of Abyan, but they continue to battle troops in the east.

The south is also home to an increasingly violent and newly empowered separatist movement.

In the north, Shiite rebels known as the Huthis continue to clash with government forces while a growing Salafist movement linked to the Islamist Al-Islah party has also joined the mix, engaging in increasingly violent clashes with rival Shiites.

Meanwhile, the unity government, equally composed of Saleh loyalists and opposition figures, remains divided, hindering its ability to face the multitude of challenges.

"The government is divided and is undermined by all sides, including former president Saleh," said analyst Abdul Ghani al-Iryani.

Saleh still heads the former ruling party, the General People's Congress, and has set up his own television channel, Yemen Today.

Relatives including his son and nephews continue to wield influence in some of the most powerful security forces, leaving the military deeply divided.

"If these divisions within the army and the government continue, they will undermine the national dialogue," said Iryani, referring to the crucial and highly anticipated talks aimed at drafting a new constitution and resolving the decades old conflicts in the north and south.

The drafting of a new constitution is also essential to the timely implementation of

both parliamentary and presidential elections planned for February 2014.

These challenges would make it "difficult for the government to fully exploit international aid even if donors honour their commitments," especially without "the comprehensive reform of the country's public finances," said Iryani.

"As the (financial) pie gets bigger, so do the political tensions between the conflicting sides," said Iryani, arguing a better approach may be for donors to "bypass the central government and deliver aid directly to regional councils."

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54568>

- **UN warns of looming humanitarian crisis in Yemen**

World Food Programme calls for more funds to help half of Yemen's population suffering from hunger.

Yemen now has the highest level in the world of malnutrition among children

GENEVA - Yemen is on the verge of a major humanitarian crisis, the UN's World

Food Programme warned Tuesday, calling for more funds to help the country where nearly half the population is going hungry.

"Yemen is sliding ever further into a humanitarian crisis," WFP spokeswoman Elisabeth Byrs told reporters in Geneva, adding that "more than 10 million people, or about half the population, is hungry and needs food".

The country, one of the poorest on the planet, now also has the highest level in the world of malnutrition among children, with two million stunted and one million acutely malnourished, Byrs said.

The WFP has scaled up its food assistance programmes in Yemen, and aims now to help a total of 5.5 million people by the end of the year, she said, compared with 3.4 million people at the end of July.

The aid increase meant the WFP was in desperate need of funds, Byrs said, adding that \$223 million is needed to fund its programmes in Yemen through the end of the year, and it is still lacking \$69 million, or 31 percent.

The shortfall meant among other things that a programme aimed at helping girls remain in school by providing them with take-home food rations for their families had been slashed.

Instead of helping 111,000 school girls, and thus reaching 777,000 people, the programme could now only reach just 53,000 school girls, or a total of 371,000 people, Byrs said.

Yemen is undergoing a difficult political transition after a year-long uprising unseated veteran leader Ali Abdullah Saleh in February and left the economy of the Arabian peninsula's poorest country in shambles.

Earlier this month, global donors made aid pledges worth \$6.4 billion to Yemen, amounting to only half of what Sanaa says it needs to revive its economy and rebuild infrastructure badly damaged during the 2011 uprising.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54556>

- **Court rejects government proposal to amend Kuwait electoral law**

Constitutional court rules that Gulf emirate's electoral constituency law is in line with constitution, rejecting government appeal.

By Omar Hasan - KUWAIT CITY

No Arab Spring but ongoing tensions in Kuwait

Kuwait's constitutional court ruled on Tuesday that the Gulf emirate's electoral constituency law was in line with the constitution, rejecting a government appeal, a correspondent reported.

"The recourse is rejected," judge Faisal al-Murshid declared in a court verdict, a day after thousands of opposition supporters rallied against the government's attempt to redefine the constituencies.

Last month, the government asked the constitutional court, whose rulings are final, to rule if the electoral constituency law was not in breach of the 1962 constitution.

The verdict was issued in a packed courtroom amid unprecedented security measures with dozens of riot police

backed by armoured vehicles deployed around the Palace of Justice where the one-minute session was held.

The law, which divides the oil-rich Gulf state into five electoral districts, was passed by parliament in 2006 following popular rallies demanding reform of the electoral process.

Parliamentary elections were held on the basis of the law in 2008 and 2009, in addition to February 2012 which the constitutional court nullified in June on the grounds of procedural flaws.

The ruling was preceded Monday by a massive rally by opposition supporters as speakers warned that a "politicised" verdict making the law unconstitutional could take Kuwait into a dark tunnel.

Opposition leaders also warned that street protests would be staged if the government tried unilaterally to amend the controversial law.

Last month the government brushed aside strong opposition objections to ask for the ruling on whether the constituency law was in breach of the constitution.

Opposition leaders had claimed the move was an attempt by the government, controlled by the Al-Sabah ruling family, to unilaterally change the constitutional system in place for a half century.

In an unprecedented ruling in June, the court scrapped the parliament elected in February and controlled by the opposition, and reinstated the previous pro-government house elected in 2009 after it was dissolved in December following youth-led protests.

The opposition has demanded that the 2009 parliament be swiftly dissolved and fresh elections held.

The OPEC member has been rocked by a series of political crises since 2006 during which the government resigned nine times and parliament was dissolved on five occasions.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54552>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Two US Marines face court martial over desecration of Afghan dead**

Press TV

September 25, 2012

Two US Marines are facing criminal charges for the desecration of Afghan dead bodies in Afghanistan's Helmand province in 2011, the US military says.

Staff Sergeants Joseph W. Chamblin and Edward W. Deptola, whose actions were captured on a video that circulated extensively on the internet, will face court martial, the US military said in a statement issued on Monday.

The soldiers were also charged with "posing for unofficial photographs with human casualties" and will face charges over failing to prevent or report misconduct by their subordinates, it added.

The video footage, which was posted on the video-sharing website YouTube and other websites on January 11, 2012, shows four members of the US Marine Corps (one Marine was filming) in

camouflage uniforms making lewd jokes while urinating on the bodies of three Taliban militants.

The actions shown in the video occurred in the Musa Qala district of Helmand province on July 27, 2011.

On August 27, three Marines pled guilty to charges of urinating on the dead bodies of Afghans and posing for pictures with the dead.

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

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

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

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

- **Afghans in Herat condemn US for arbitrary detentions**

Press TV

September 25, 2012

Protesters in Afghanistan's western city of Herat hold a demonstration condemning arbitrary detentions made by the US forces in the country, Press TV reports.

Afghan villagers gathered inside Herat Governor's office compound on Tuesday to voice their anger over the US detentions of their relatives.

The protesters said Afghan nationals are still being detained by US forces during overnight operations.

A Press TV correspondent in Afghanistan said the governor of Herat has promised to discuss the issue with US military officials.

Afghan tribal leaders have long been accusing US-led foreign troops of storming Afghan people's homes and take them to unknown places without coordination with local authorities.

The pre-dawn attacks on civilian houses have been a source of tension in Kabul's ties with Washington and NATO, with the Afghan side repeatedly calling for an end for the controversial operations.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has also recently said that foreign troops are not allowed to detain local people during their military operations.

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

- **Afghans call on government to sever ties with US, France**

Press TV

September 25, 2012

Hundreds of demonstrators have poured into the streets in Afghanistan's northeastern Badakhshan Province to protest against a US-made anti-Islam movie and a French magazine's recent publication of cartoons insulting Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

Shouting anti-US slogans, the angry protesters on Monday called on the government to sever diplomatic ties with the US and France in response to the blasphemous acts.

“Some 500 to 1000 people took to the streets in Keshm district of Badakhshan Province, chanting anti-US and anti-France slogans,” provincial spokesman Abdul Maroof Rasekh said.

Also on Sunday, Afghans blocked a main highway in Nangarhar Province to voice their outrage against the recent anti-Islam moves in the West.

The Muslim world has been boiling with anti-Western sentiments over the movie and the sacrilegious cartoons printed in the French weekly Charlie Hebdo.

Anti-blasphemy demonstrations have been held across the Muslim world and several non-Muslim countries, with protesters in some countries marching on the US embassies and torching US flags.

Protesters demand that Washington apologize to the Muslim world over the film, which was reportedly financed by more than 100 Zionist Jews. They also call for the punishment of the perpetrators of such insults.

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

- **39 Taliban militants, 2 security forces killed in Afghanistan**

Press TV

September 25, 2012

The Afghan government says its security forces have killed 39 Taliban militants and wounded several others during cleanup operations across the country, Press TV reports.

The Afghan Interior Ministry issued a statement on Monday, saying its forces, backed by foreign troops, carried out the operations in Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Wardak, Ghazni, Ghor, Nimruz, Nangarhar, and Baghlan provinces, and killed 39 Taliban militants.

The statement added that five militants were injured and 72 others were arrested in the operations.

Two government soldiers were also killed and 12 others were wounded in the clashes with the militants.

Insecurity continues to rise across Afghanistan despite the presence of thousands of US-led forces in the war-torn country.

This year, over 340 foreign troops have been died in the war in Afghanistan.

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

- **S. Korea extends deployment of troops in Afghanistan**

SEOUL, Sept. 25 (Xinhua) -- South Korea's Cabinet on Tuesday endorsed a plan to extend the deployment of some of its troops tasked with protecting aid workers in strife-torn Afghanistan.

The one-year extension will allow some 70 troops to remain in Parwan province by December 2013 to protect 150 reconstruction workers there, while the remaining troops of the 350-member Oshino unit will end their mission by the end of the year.

The government also approved a bill to extend the deployment of South Korean troops in the Gulf of Aden, off Somalia.

A 310-member unit was dispatched to the Gulf of Aden in 2009 to fight rampant piracy.

The deployment of South Korean troops training special operations forces of the United Arab Emirates was also extended by a year.

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

*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Nebahat Tanrıverdi O** 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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