



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

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1. IRAQ

- **Nujaifi looking with Erdogan in Ankara bilateral relations and the Syrian crisis impacts.**

Baghdad / NINA/--Parliament Speaker Osama Nujaifi discussed with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara today , "the overall relations between the two countries and means of enhancing them to serve the mutual interest of the two neighboring countries.

Nujaifi press office said in a statement : " Najafi stressed during a meeting with Erdogan the importance of developing relations between Baghdad and Ankara, adding that the two sides discussed the situation in the region, especially Syrian crisis and its repercussions expected on the two countries.

The statement ended : " Nujaifi is expected to meet this evening with Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu at a dinner in the Turkish capital of Ankara.

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

- **Iraqi MP to U.S: arming the Iraqi army is a diplomatically and morally commitment.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, for the Iraqiya Free coalition, Alia Nassif asked the U.S. administration to commit to the strategic framework agreement regarding arming the Iraqi army.



the Information Office of the coalition quoting her as saying "The most important responsibilities and duties of the United States within the strategic framework agreement is to help the Iraqi government to arm its military and ensure its ability to maintain the sovereignty and security of Iraq, externally and internally."

She added: "the U.S must not justify the delay of arming the Iraqi forces by a series of preceded measures."

She continued: "The time that has passed since the formation of the first unit of the new Iraqi army is relatively long, and this army still lacks armament, which actually qualifies to maintain the national sovereignty of Iraq," emphasizing: "the need for the U.S. administration to commit, diplomatically and morally, in this regard.

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

- **National Alliance discusses the political developments and openness and calm committed by all parties.**



BAGHDAD / NINA / The Iraqi National Alliance discussed, during its regular meeting yesterday evening under the chairmanship of Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the political developments in the country, and evaluate the atmosphere of the openness and calm committed by all parties, which

gave the reform project way to move in a steady pace.

A statement by Jaafari's office said: "the importance of working to unify positions towards the laws proposed in the House of Representatives was emphasized and speeding up to legislate them due to its necessity to complete building constitutional institutions."

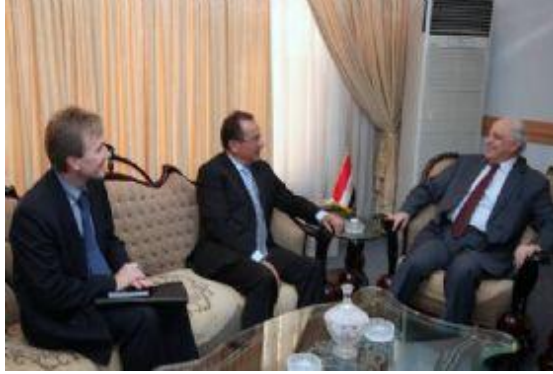
The Alliance stressed "the need to strengthen the national security, and resolute response to terrorism by supporting security forces, and work to develop their capacity to reduce the repercussions of regional crises as well as the need to unify the political and the national media speech".

The Alliance, in its meeting said that serving the citizen, and providing the requirements of living are the Alliance's legislative and executive priorities.

The political body of the National Alliance decided to form committees to follow the detailed of laws discussed

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

- **Abbawi, British Ambassador discuss bilateral relations, means to consolidate them**



Baghdad (NINA) – Foreign Undersecretary, Labeed Abbawi, discussed on Monday, Sep. 3, with British Ambassador to Iraq, Simon Collis, the relations between Iraq and Britain and means to consolidate them.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that, in the meeting, cooperation and coordination between Iraq and the UK are discussed, as well as the situation in the area.

It added that the Iraq-Kuwait relations are also discussed, in addition of getting Iraq out of the mandate of Article VII of the UN Security Council.

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

- **Iraq chairs Arab League meeting on follow up Baghdad Summit's resolutions**

Cairo (NINA) – The Follow up committee on implementing recent Arab Summit's resolutions, met on the level of permanent representatives to the Arab League, chaired by Iraq's Ambassador to Egypt and its representative to the League, Qays al-Azzawi.

The meeting discussed the Arab League Secretariat's half-yearly report on following up implementing Baghdad Summit's resolutions.

Informed source said that the meeting will submit its report to the Ministerial Meeting on Wednesday, Sep.5, chaired by Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari.

The Committee consists of Iraq, Qatar, Libya, Kuwait and Lebanon, in addition to the Arab League, represented by Ass. Secretary General, Ahmed bin Helli.

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

- **Barham Saleh affirms Talabani is in final phase of physical therapy treatment**



Baghdad (NINA) – Deputy Secretary General of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Barham Saleh, affirmed that President Jalal Talabai is in excellent health and he is undergoing the final phase of physical therapy treatment in a Berlin medical center; and is expected to return home soon.

In a statement to the press on Monday, Sep. 3, Saleh said that he expect political activities to be resumed after Talabani's return, because of his moral and constitutional status for all Iraqis.

He pointed out that the crisis in Iraq is not between Kurdistan region and Baghdad, rather it is an Iraqi components' problem with the concept of partnership and pluralism, as well as Iraqi citizens' problem

who have been waiting for ten years to get electricity restored as well as security and economic improvement and services.

Saleh stressed that the crisis must be resolved through constitutional means, not attempting to transfer it or export it.

It is worth noting that most political blocs are counting on President Talabani's return to work out a solution to current political crisis

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

- **An experimental Iraqi satellite to be launched by the end of 2013**

Iraqi Science and Technology Ministry revealed, on Friday, it will be launching an Iraqi satellite in cooperation with an Italian university, by the end of next year, noting that the satellite called “Tigris” will be dedicated to desertification and dust issues, and internal communications between governmental institutions. The ministry hopes to set a budget for the satellite station establishment in Iraq next year, a source revealed.

“Our ministry agreed with an Italian university upon training, for 14 months, an Iraqi delegation formed of 3 Iraqi ministries employees who receive afterwards Masters Degrees in Satellites Technology,” Science and Technology Minister Abdul Karim Al Samarraï told Alsumarianews indicating that an Iraqi experimental satellite will be consequently launched in cooperation with the university.

“This experimental satellite will be launched by the end of 2013,” Science and Technology Minister said adding that a station in Iraq, one in Italy and another in South Africa will be dedicated for this satellite.

“The ministry will be receiving pictures taken by the satellite that shall be called Tigris,” Samarraï explained pointing out that this satellite, which is a new Iraqi experience to be developed in the future, will be operating for about 3 years.

“The United Nations is also supporting this project,” the minister uttered hoping to set a budget for the satellite station establishment next year.

“Our ministry will specify the satellite fields of operation such as desertification and dust issues, and internal communications between governmental institutions,” Samarraï advanced while he considered stretching employees’ training until obtaining their PhD degrees.

“The delegation is formed of 9 employees from Science and Technology Ministry, 5 from Higher Education Ministry, and one from Transport Ministry,” Samarraï stated concluding that a Science and Technology Ministry envoy will be visiting Italy in November 17th to discuss, with concerned Italian Minister, about the delegation issue and agree upon the best means to enhance cooperation in this direction.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/62222/an-experimental-iraqi-satellite-to-be-launched-by/en>

- **Losses in Babel banking and small shops due to fake bills spreading**

Fake bills’ spreading in Babel Province increased losses of banking and small shops owners who assure that these bills come from governmental banks. Governmental parties, for their part, accused banking shops owners of

spreading fake bills in the province, a source revealed.

When your learn losses numbers of banking shops owners, you never imagine that they could refer to latest losses in Babel caused by fake bills that are believed to be coming from governmental banks.

“Look at all these fake bills that are difficult to detect, they even carry the bank of origin label,” a banking shop owner explained.

Losses weren't restricted to big money trading shops, they also covered smaller ones of which owners stressed that fake bills come from governmental banks.

“We take these bills to banks of origin and we are told that they are fake ones,” the banking shop owner argued stating that he cannot differentiate between authentic and fake bills when his shop is crowded.

Governmental parties in Babel, for their part, accused banking shops owners of spreading fake bills in the province.

“Many banking shops in Babel are not officially licensed, we are closely monitoring them though,” Babel governor Mohamed Al Massudi said.

Babel governor also revealed that security parties will be handing him a detailed report about banking shops in the province while officials in Babel governmental banks refused to comment about the issue.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/62202/losses-in-babel-banking-and-small-shops-due-to-fak/en>

- **Kirkuk Emergency Regiments Command Chief survives an assassination attempt central Kirkuk**

A Kirkuk police source reported, on Thursday, that Kirkuk Emergency Regiments Command Chief survived an assassination attempt with 3 explosions targeting his convoy central Kirkuk. Explosions led to the injury of an Iraqi soldier, the source revealed.

“Kirkuk Emergency Regiments Command Chief, Brigadier General Khattab Omar, survived an assassination attempt, this morning, with 3 explosive devices that

blew up at the same time central Kirkuk targeting Omar's convoy," the source told Alsumarianews noting that explosions led to the injury of an Iraqi soldier who happened to be in the site during the explosion.

"A security force cordoned off the incident site and transported the wounded to a hospital," the source added on the condition of anonymity indicating that security forces also launched investigations to discover the explosion circumstances and parties behind it.

Districts and Regions Police Chief, Brigadier General Sarhad Kader, also survived an assassination attempt, southwestern Kirkuk on Wednesday, which led to the death and injury of 7 bodyguards in Al Riyadh neighborhood. Also on Wednesday, a policeman was killed and an intelligence member was injured in an explosion central Kirkuk, while 2 Peshmerga fighters were injured in a blasting device explosion southern the city, sources advanced.

Kirkuk Province, situated 250 km northern Baghdad, witnesses constant violence

targeting security forces and civilians, and murders under personal conflicts label.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/62182/kirkuk-emergency-regiments-command-chief-survives/en>

- **Nusayif calls US administration to adhere to Strategic Framework Agreement**

Baghdad (AIN) -MP Aliya Nusayif of the Iraqiya Hurra bloc demanded the US administration to "adhere to the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), in respect to arming the Iraqi Army."

Nusayif said in a statement by the Media Office of the bloc "One of the most important responsibilities of the US administration within the SFA is to support the Iraqi Government in arming Iraqi Army in a way that ensures maintaining the sovereignty and security of Iraq internally and externally."

"The USA should not justify delay of arming the IA on pretext of taking a series of measures that must be followed before the armament process is started since the US administration does not take any

precedent procedures in this regard while dealing with other countries," she added.

"The period that passed since forming the first units of the Iraqi Army is relatively long, yet the Army lacks the armament that qualify it to maintain the national sovereignty of Iraq," Nusayif emphasized.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17744:nusaiyf-calls-us-administration-to-adhere-to-strategic-framework-agreement&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Jaafary, Ali bin al-Hussein review political process**

Baghdad (AIN) -The Head of the Iraqi National Alliance, Ibrahim al-Jaafary, reviewed with the Head of the Constitutional Monarchy Movement in Iraq, Al-Sharif Ali bin al-Hussein, the political situation in the country.

Jaafary's Office reported in a statement "The meeting discussed the outcomes of the dialogues conducted among the national forces and the proposed solutions to end the political crisis."

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17741:jaafary-al-sharif-ali-bin-al-hussein-review-political-process&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Kurdish MP: "US delegation's visit to Iraq to reassure US voters over stability of Iraq"**

Baghdad (AIN) –MP, Ruz Mahdi, of the Kurdistan Alliance described the visit of the US delegation to Iraq as "A step to reassure the US voters that the situation in Iraq is stable."

Speaking to All Iraqi News Agency (AIN), he said "The visit of the US delegation which might be headed by the US Vice-President, Joseph Biden, is due to the preparations of the US presidential elections and to reassure to the US voters that the Iraqi situation is stable."

"We rule out the possibility of bringing a settlement to the crisis in Iraq through this visit," he added, stressing that "No side has a settlement to the crisis where we need the real intentions, especially by the State of Law Coalition," he concluded.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17723:kurdish-mp-considers-us-delegations-visit-to-iraq-qto-reassure-us-electors-over-stability-of-iraq-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Iraq seeks to open cultural office in Cairo**



BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq has expressed desire on Saturday to open a cultural office in Cairo to follow up 2000 Iraqi students in Egyptian universities.

This came during a meeting between Higher Education Minister Ali al-Adib and Egyptian Consul in Baghdad Mohammad Fakhri to discuss the possibility of opening a cultural office in Cairo, according to a ministry's statement.

The minister underlined the importance of developing scientific cooperation between Iraqi and Egyptian universities through mutual visits and holding joint workshops.

The Egyptian diplomat said that opening cultural office in Cairo would contribute in boosting cultural and scientific relations between the two countries.

http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%28fw0o2u45fdzyp551zp3h445%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150271&l=1

- **Syrian crisis shed shadows on security in Iraq, MP**

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Independent bloc, affiliate to State of Law bloc, MP Saleh al-Asadi called the Iraqi government and security forces to review their plans, expecting that the Syrian crisis shed it is shadows on Iraqi security.

In a statement today, he added that the late assassinations proved the lack in the intelligence work.

On the other hand, he warned that the latest explosions and killings by silencers aimed at denominational incitements.

For the last year and a half, Syria is witnessing popular protests against the regime that led to armed struggle and thousands of killings, among fears that these events will turn into a civil war that will affect and spread to neighboring countries.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/%28S%28fw0o2u45fdzyp551zp3h445%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150275&l=1

- **More than 50,000 take part in Ahrar bloc primary elections in Karbala**

KARBALA / Aswat al-Iraq: The outcome of the al-Ahrar bloc's primary elections in Karbala will be announced later on Saturday, noting that more than 50,000 voters took part in the elections.



"The elections witnessed the participation of more than 50,000 voters, third of them are women," Member of the Karbala council, Jassem al-Fatlawi, told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

He praised the primary elections for the provincial councils, districts and areas of Ahrar bloc, describing them as a democratic experience.

"The outcome of the elections could be announced later on Saturday," he added.

The bloc belongs to the Shiite Sadrist bloc.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/%28S%28fw0o2u45fdzyp551zp3h445%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=150270&l=1

- **Negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil Remain at a Standstill**

SULAIMANI, Kurdistan Region—Several Kurdish lawmakers in Baghdad believe that the situation is not yet ripe for negotiations between the Kurdistan Region and the central government.

However, they added that tensions between political factions have declined over the past two months.

Muhammad Kiyani, an MP from the Change Movement (Gorran) in Iraqi Parliament, believes that the Kurds must not wait for negotiations to resume in order to resolve their domestic issues and unite their voice towards Baghdad.

“It is important for the Kurdish leadership to stay neutral and not get involved in the Sunni-Shia disputes or the disputes of their sponsoring countries, such as Iran and the Gulf States,” Kiyani said.

He described the situation in Baghdad as “no one accepting the other,” and added, “Wasting time is not in the best interest of the Kurds since the Kurdish issue is not only with one side.”

Adel Abdullah, an MP from the Kurdistan Alliance, said that there is no sign of any negotiation in Baghdad.

“The attempts to resume talks between the political factions have been futile,” he said.

According to the lawmakers, Iraq is in political turmoil and the situation is

getting worse, with none of the political factions having a solution.

Abdullah believes a successful negotiation between the parties in Iraq requires advance preparations and compromises being made from all sides.

Last week, the Non-Aligned Summit was held in Tehran where leaders discussed solutions to the current situation in Syria. During the summit, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki proposed an initiative to end Syria’s violence.

“Maliki should have proposed an initiative to end Iraq’s political turmoil instead,” Abdullah said.

He added, “It’s surprising that Maliki is busy finding a solution for Syria while his own country is in crisis.”

Negotiation and abiding by the constitution are two things that constantly are being brought up by Iraq’s political leaders. Ironically, both of them are completely ignored in Iraq.

A lawmaker from the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) says that everybody talks

about negotiations, but there is no indication of negotiation at all.

Najib Abdulla, the head of the KIU faction in Iraqi Parliament, told Rudaw, “Ultimately, everyone must resort to negotiations.”

Abdulla believes that the return of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani will not prepare the ground for negotiation. “It would be a disaster if the negotiations that everyone believes in fail,” he added.

The Erbil Agreement was the last agreement to be signed between the Iraqi political factions. Maliki promised to implement the contents of the agreement, including Article 140 addressing the disputed territories. However, Maliki later refused to abide by the agreement.

Abdulla confirmed that negotiations will fail without advanced preparation. He said, “If the negotiations fail, tensions will rise and the subject of withdrawing confidence from Maliki will resume.”

In June, 147 signatures requesting a no-confidence motion against the PM were gathered, but Talabani claimed the

number was insufficient to bring the matter to parliament. Kurdish political groups were prominent among Maliki’s opponents.

Following a meeting with Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, a senior official in the National Coalition, Iraq’s deputy prime minister, Rozh Nuri, declared that the Kurds are ready to negotiate.

Jaafari, who is currently leading efforts to find a solution to the crisis, proposed a reform plan.

However Muyad Taib, an MP from the Kurdistan Alliance, believes that such a proposal is a waste of time. “So far, the Kurdish leadership has not seen the contents of this reform plan,” Taib said.

The lawmakers who spoke to Rudaw also said it was too late for such a plan.

Taib added, “Even some political factions inside the National Coalition disagree with the reform plan.”

Referring to Maliki’s initiative to end violence in Syria, Taib said, “It is better for

Maliki to find a solution for his own country's crisis."

He added, "We will not negotiate with Baghdad unless it implements the Erbil Agreement."

The Kurdish lawmakers noted that, in the future, short deadlines must be set for Baghdad to implement demands.

"The Kurdish leadership will miss many opportunities if they don't set aside their differences and face Baghdad with one voice and one national demand," Kiyani concluded.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5163.html>

2. IRAN

• UN Chief Asks for Help from Ayatollah Khamenei as Muslim World Leader

TEHRAN (FNA)- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a recent meeting with Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei in Tehran asked Ayatollah Khamenei, as the Muslim world leader, to help the UN resolve the regional crises.

"As a supreme leader and also religious leader of not only Iran, but also this region, you can play crucially important role," the UN chief said during the meeting with the Supreme Leader in Tehran on Wednesday on the sidelines of the 16th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in the Iranian capital.

"You have an important role to play; you have been playing in the situation in Lebanon, Iraq. I know you are very much concerned for situation in Bahrain.

"These are all the areas that Iran has been playing and will continue to play an important role," the UN chief added.

"I like to focus on one area today, on Syria. One of my main purposes of coming to meet you is to ask you to exercise maximum influence in resolving this crisis in Syria," Ban Ki-moon said.

"I think in this region, only Iran can play this crucially important role," reiterated the UN chief.

Ban Ki-moon was in Tehran to attend the 16th NAM heads-of-state summit and

confer with Iranian officials on different regional and international developments.

Upon arrival in Tehran, the UN chief announced that he intends to meet with senior Iranian officials, specially the Leader, to discuss regional issues, the crisis in Syria in particular.



Earlier on the day, Ban Ki-moon met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and discussed the latest regional and international developments.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the most important regional and international issues and NAM's role in the establishment of sustainable peace and security in the world.

In addition to the meeting with Ahmadinejad, the UN chief also met with Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Saeed Jalili.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061642>

- **Iran Reiterates Undisputable Sovereignty over Persian Gulf Islands**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Tehran once again rejected the baseless claims raised by the UAE and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) on the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb, reiterating that the trio are indispensable parts of the Iranian territory.



"The islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb are indispensable parts of the Islamic Republic of Iran's territories and they will remain Iranian forever," Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said in a statement on Tuesday.

His remarks came after the recent claims raised in a statement of the 124th PGCC ministerial session about the UAE's ownership of the three Persian Gulf islands.

"Such worn-out and old claims are useless and more than being a reality, they are raised (by Arab states) to evade providing a response for the civil demands of (their) people," he added.

"Repeating these claims will not change the realities of the region," the spokesman underscored.

International documents clearly show that the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa which were historically owned by Iran, temporarily fell to British control in 1903. The islands were returned to Iran based on an agreement in 1971 before the UAE was born.

Iran has repeatedly declared that its ownership of the three islands is unquestionable.

Under international law, no state can defy any agreement, which came into being before its establishment.

Yet, the UAE continues to make territorial claims against the Islamic Republic despite historical evidence and international regulations.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061666>

- **Iran to Host UN Int'l Energy Conference in Autumn**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The United Nations named the Iranian capital as the host of the next UN international energy conference this December.



The hosting of the conference was officially granted to Iran by UN Under-Secretary General and UN-HAIBTAT Executive Director Joan Clos on the sidelines of the Sixth session of the biennial World Urban Forum in the ancient Italian city of Naples.

The UN energy conference will be held in Iran in December with urban officials, mayors and ministers from 30 world states in attendance.

Naples is hosting the World Urban Forum on September 1-7. The theme of the Forum is The Urban Future.

Also during the UN meeting in Naples, the UN under-secretary general granted the United Nations' Award for Best Successful Urban Management Experiences to the Iranian capital, Tehran, and Austria's capital city, Vienna.

The UN also provided both Tehran and Vienna with access to its data bank of successful urban experiences, including plans of over 4,000 research and executive activities.

Other world cities can access this data bank through Tehran and Vienna.

Clos presented a tablet of the UN successful urban management experiences to the Iranian officials after visiting the Tehran booth on the sidelines of the World Urban Forum.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061664>

- **Senior Iranian, Russian Security Officials Meet in Tehran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Senior Iranian and Russian security officials met in the Iranian capital and explored avenues for the further expansion of Tehran-Moscow ties and cooperation.

During the meeting held in Tehran on Monday, Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Undersecretary Ali Baqeri and Assistant Secretary of the Russian National Security Council Yevgeny Lukyanov exchanged views on political and security cooperation between the two countries as well as the latest regional and international developments.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia views diplomacy as only way to solve Iran's nuclear issue.

In his latest remarks, Russia's top diplomat Sergei Lavrov in August expressed optimism about the prospects of talks between Iran and the world powers, and described diplomacy as the only way to settle Tehran's nuclear issue.

Lavrov slammed attempts made to undermine diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving issues related to Iran's nuclear energy program.

He pointed to the ongoing negotiations between Iran and the Group 5+1 (the five permanent UN Security Council members plus Germany), and stated, "Those who say that this (the negotiation process) is a failure simply want to step up hysterical rhetoric. That's wrong."



"Confrontational contexts in this issue would be counterproductive," he added.

Iran and the Group 5+1 have held several rounds of talks this year, including two days of negotiations in Baghdad in May and a one-day meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, in April.

The latest round of talks between the lead negotiators of Iran and the sextet took place in Moscow in mid June.

In Moscow Tehran's envoys presented undeniable proofs and evidence of Iran's entitlement to the right of nuclear enrichment.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061650>

- **Iran building missile system more advanced than S-300**

TEHRAN, Sept. 3 (MNA) – After Russia refused to deliver S-300 missile system to Iran experts at home have started work on producing a missile system which will be much more advanced than the S-300 system, the commander of the Khatam-ol-Anbia Anti-Aircraft Base announced on Monday.

The missile system, called Bavar 373, will in fact be a replacement for S-300, Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili told a press conference.

Esmaili also said air defense maneuvers will start either in the next calendar

month of Mehr (September 22-October 21) or Aban (October 22-Novemembr 20).

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1687782>

- **Iran is sole provider of security in Persian Gulf: IRGC naval chief**

BUSHEHR, Sep. 3 (MNA) – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Naval Force said on Sunday that Iran is the sole power to keep the Persian Gulf safe.

“The only power that can establish security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz and the Middle East is Iran and the world has gradually realized this,” Admiral Ali Fadavi told a gathering in the city of Bushehr on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

He added in addition to countries in the region many countries in other parts of the world are attentive to the security of the Persian Gulf.

Pointing the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf, the general said in the 1980s, when Iraq was in war against Iran, only 9 million barrels of oil were exported from

the Persian Gulf per day and now it is 19 million barrels which will increase to 35 to 40 millions barrels by the year 2020.

He also said since the U.S. warships entered the Persian Gulf the security situation in the region has started worsening rather than improving.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1687985>

- **Strike on Iran will haunt Israel: French foreign minister**

I think that if there were an Israeli attack, unfortunately it could come back to haunt Israel.”

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius has warned the Israeli regime against attacking Iran's nuclear facilities, saying that such an act of aggression will backfire overwhelmingly on the Tel Aviv regime.

“I think that if there were an Israeli attack, unfortunately it could come back to haunt Israel,” Fabius said on Monday.

The United States and Israel have repeatedly threatened Iran with a military option in an attempt to force the Islamic Republic to halt its nuclear energy 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 the nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Iranian officials have also promised a crushing response to any military strike against the country, warning that any such measure could result in a war that would spread beyond the region.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/04/259741/france-strike-on-iran-will-haunt-israel/>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Beilin: Poor relations with Obama are PM's fault**

Former deputy FM says Obama is "super pro-Israel" but his administration sees

Netanyahu as "interfering in the US elections."

US President Barack Obama has a big problem with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, despite denials by US Ambassador Dan Shapiro, former deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin said Tuesday.

Shapiro called reports about tension between the United States and Israel over Iran overheated and said the relationship between Obama and Netanyahu was "just what it needs to be." But Beilin said he heard from his contacts in Washington that Netanyahu had crossed red lines.

"Whether the US administration admits it or not, they see Bibi [Netanyahu] as interfering in the US election and gambling on [Republican candidate Mitt] Romney winning," Beilin said. "Shapiro says relations between countries are good, which is true. But the relations between the two leaders are very poor. I don't remember it being so bad before, and Israel will pay a price for it."

Beilin said the Obama administration was upset about the way Netanyahu received Romney in Israel, Romney's fundraiser in

Jerusalem and the prime minister's close ties with the man spending billions to bring down the president: Las Vegas casino magnate Sheldon Adelson.

While both countries downplayed the American decision to downgrade a joint drill set for next month, Beilin said it was a message to Netanyahu from Obama and not a technical matter. He said that unlike other prime ministers, Netanyahu cannot call the president when he needs him.

He said a call to save Israelis under siege at the its embassy in Cairo was an exception.

Beilin called Obama "Super Pro-Israel" and said Netanyahu was at fault for the poor relations because he did not accept Obama's request to continue a 10-month West Bank construction moratorium. But he said he does blame Obama for failing to advance peace talks with the Palestinians and for making such a freeze a precondition for talks.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283736>

- **PM continues pushing world on 'red lines' for Iran**

White House denies Israeli report it sent secret non-aggression messages to Iran; 'NY Times' reports the Obama administration is moving ahead with range of steps to forestall an Israeli attack.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu on Monday continued his campaign to get the United States and the world to lay down a "red line" for Iran, amid initial signs that US President Barack Obama might now be willing to do so.

Netanyahu, during a meeting with a group of wounded US and Israeli veterans, said that the clearer the red line, the less likelihood there is of bloodshed.

Netanyahu said Iran, which he characterized as a "brutal regime," was galloping forward with its nuclear program because it did not see a "clear red line from the international community. And it doesn't see the necessary resolve and determination from the international community."

The greater the resolve, and the clearer the red line, he said, the less would be the

chance of conflict because the Iranians would be more likely to back off.

In other words, one government official said, an attack could be averted if plain benchmarks were established, and the Iranians were faced with a clear either/or proposition: Stop uranium enrichment and allow inspection of nuclear sites, or face military action.

Netanyahu's comments came the same day that The New York Times ran a story saying the Obama administration was moving ahead "with a range of steps short of war that it hopes will forestall an Israeli attack, while forcing the Iranians to take more seriously negotiations that are all but stalemated."

According to the report, a major naval exercise in the Persian Gulf, a new anti-missile system in Qatar and a more forceful clamp down on Iranian oil revenue were steps already in the works.

[Click here for full Jpost coverage of the Iranian threat](#)

The paper said the administration was also considering new declarations by

Obama spelling out what might bring about military action – Netanyahu's "red lines" – as well as more covert activity.

The New York Times report of a more aggressive US position contrasted sharply with a Yediot Aharonot report that said the US recently used two European countries to send messages to Iran saying the US would not be dragged into an Israeli attack, and in return expected Iran to refrain from striking US strategic targets in the region.

The White House sharply denied that report.

"It is incorrect, completely incorrect," White House spokesman Jay Carney said while accompanying Obama on a campaign trip in Ohio.

"The report is false and we don't talk about hypotheticals."

Intelligence Agencies Minister Dan Meridor said he did not "know what kind of messages Yediot Aharonot heard, but [thinks] the Iranians understand... that if they cross a line towards a bomb, they could encounter very strong resistance,

including all the options that are on the table – as the American president has said.”

Meridor, in an Israel Radio interview, said he did not sense a rupture in Israel’s ties with the US and stressed that it was very important to maintain Washington’s support.

The minister added that the international effort against Iran was taking its toll on the Iranians, who may now fear enriching uranium to a higher, bomb-grade level because of the knowledge they could encounter a very strong response if they crossed the line towards acquiring a nuclear bomb.

He said that the international community needed to increase its pressure by strengthening the sanctions against it. One step that some Israeli officials are calling for are sanctions on Iran’s Central Bank.

Vice Premier Silvan Shalom also dismissed the Yediot report and the notion that the US would not stand by Israel if it were to strike the Islamic Republic.

“The sole disagreement between Israel and the US is in regard to timing,” Shalom told Army Radio. “The US is obligated to the existential and security interests of Israel.

We are much closer than people think.”

In a related development, a senior Iranian military official said Monday Iran built about 30 percent of a missile defense system it is developing in place of the Russian S- 300 system Moscow refused to sell it.

Farzad Esmaili, commander of the army’s air defense force, also reiterated that Iran will hold a large-scale air defense exercise in the next two months covering the whole country, the Iranian Students’ News Agency reported.



Iran has unveiled upgrades to weapons systems and held several military

exercises this year to demonstrate its ability to defend itself. ISNA quoted Esmaili on Monday as saying Iran would test its air defense systems in mid-to-late October or early November.

“We will use whatever we have in order to defend Iran,” Esmaili said. “Today the main threat is an air threat, because it achieves quick results, therefore it was felt it was necessary that air defenses work independently.... One of our missions is being vigilant over sensitive centers like refineries and nuclear sites,” Esmaili said.

“A new, more advanced system with higher capabilities than the S-300 in detecting, identifying and destroying targets is pending,” ISNA quoted Esmaili as saying. “About 30 percent of the work related to building the Bavar-373 has been completed and we will make efforts so that we can announce the completion of this project by next year.”

Moscow refused to sell the sophisticated S-300 system to Iran on the ground that it would violate expanded UN sanctions imposed over Iran’s nuclear program.

Iran announced in November 2010 that it had adapted another Russian-made missile system to perform more like the S-300, a precision, mobile, long-range air defense system that can detect, track and destroy ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and low-flying aircraft.

Military experts have cast doubt on Iran’s claims of weapons advances, especially regarding its missile program, saying they are often exaggerated.

On Sunday, Iranian Deputy Defense Minister Mohammad Eslami said plans were afoot to install missiles on long-distance unmanned drones that featured in missile tests earlier this year. Authorities say the Karrar drone, unveiled in 2010, has a range of 1,000 km. and can carry a single cruise missile or several smaller missiles.

Meanwhile, in a move that Israeli officials said had little significance, Iran allowed Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj to visit the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz.

Iran has allowed International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors into the site in the past.

Elbegdorj took part in last weeks Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Tehran, and his uranium-rich country is believed to be constructing its own nuclear power plant.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283691>

- **Hebron Committee Condemns Israeli Takeover of Market**

HEBRON, September 3, 2012 (WAFA) – The Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, in a statement Monday, condemned the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Settlement Affairs decision to make al-Hisba, the vegetable Market in the old city of Hebron, under the Hebron settlement council's control.

The Market has been completely closed down since 2000 up till now.

“We strongly condemn this dangerous decision and warn of its serious implications on the geographic, demographic, political and economic reality,” said the statement.

It said, this Israeli decision comes as part of the Israeli policy to Judaize and strengthen the Jewish settlers' presence in the old city of Hebron, aiming to empty it from its residents after Israel illegally takes over Palestinian land and properties.

This decision aims to completely eliminate all legal and political possibilities of re-opening the market, which is considered the main commercial center in Hebron, as well as eliminates all possibilities of returning these shops to their original Palestinian owners, it added.

The decision bypasses prior judicial decisions achieved by human rights organizations and the Israeli Peace Now at the Israeli High Court, on March 2012; to evacuate the settlers from shops in the market and return them to their Palestinian owners.

The committee urged the Israeli Ministerial Committee to respect the judicial decisions made by the Israeli Supreme Court, without seeking frail excuses and justifications in order to take control of the market and shops in Hebron, contrary to statutory provisions, international norms and conventions, as

well as humanitarian and ethical standards that obligate the occupying power not to infringe the public and private property of the civilians.

This decision was a response to a petition filed by human rights organizations and the Israeli Peace Now at the Israeli High Court to evacuate the settlers from shops in the market and return them to their Palestinian owners.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20586>

- **Settlers Harass Hebron Hills Children, says Group**

AT-TUWANI, SOUTH HEBRON HILLS, September 3, 2012 (WAFA) – Palestinian Children of Tuba and Magayir al-Abeed villages, in the South Hebron Hills, are still exposed to regular attacks by Havat Ma'on settlers even under Israeli military escort, according to a press release by the rights group Operation Dove.

Since 2001, Israeli settlers from Havat Ma'on outpost have repeatedly attacked the children, aged between 6 and 15 years, on their way to and from school, preventing almost all of them from

attending school and forcing the few able children to take longer and rougher paths.

In order to reach the school of At-Tuwani, the children coming from Tuba and Magayir al-Abeed usually walk through the shortest route (about 20 minutes) that passes between the Israeli settlement of Ma'on and Havat Ma'on outpost (Hill 833).

This route is the main road linking their villages and At-Tuwani.

In 2004, the volunteers of Operation Dove and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) began to accompany the children along the shortest route, but the violent attacks against the children and the volunteers made this solution impracticable.

These attacks brought the matter to the attention of the Children Rights Committee of the Knesset, which established in November 2004 a military escort to protect the children. From November 2004, CPT and Operation Dove have constantly monitored the military escort, documenting the failures of the Israeli army and the settlers' violence.

During the school year 2011-2012, the volunteers of Operation Dove registered that in 35% of the cases; the military escort was late, causing the children to lose about 19 hours of lessons.

In addition, in 48% of cases, the military escort arrived late after school, forcing the children to wait for a total time of about 21 hours. While in eight cases (2% of the total), the military escort did not arrive at all.

Moreover, the soldiers themselves were aggressive toward the children in 28 registered cases, forcing them to run or putting them at risk with their behavior.

In 47% of the cases, the soldiers did not walk with the children and in 54% of them; the soldiers did not complete the agreed route, leaving the children in danger where they were repeatedly attacked by the settlers.

During the last school year, there were 17 cases of aggressive behavior practiced by Israeli settlers against Palestinian children; a total of 143 attacks since the beginning of the military escort.

Although there were instances of effective intervention by the military in protecting the children, it can be concluded that the escort continues to be insufficient and often negligent in defending the Palestinian children from violence and ensuring their right to education, in violation of Articles 2-3-6-16-19-38 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20587>

- **Rights Group Calls on Israel to Stop Pillaging Natural Resources**

RAMALLAH, September 3, 2012 (Wafa) - The Palestinian human rights group, Al-Haq, in a press release Monday, called on the Israeli authorities to immediately stop the pillaging of the Palestinian natural resources and halt the concession of substantial financial incentives to settlers living in the area.

Al-Haq announced the publication of "Pillage of the Dead Sea: Israel's Unlawful Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." The report examines Israel's responsibilities

with respect to the treatment of the occupied Territories natural resources in the Dead Sea area.

Israel must also revoke the mud mining permission granted to Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories Ltd. in 2004, said the report.

It reiterated that, under international humanitarian law, Israel is obliged to administer the natural resources belonging to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) without damaging or diminishing them. Accordingly, it is prohibited from exploiting them in a way that undermines their capital and results in economic benefits for Israeli citizens, including settlers, or for its national economy.

By granting substantial financial benefits to the settlers, as well as by licensing Ahava Dead Sea Laboratories Ltd., 44.5% of whose shares are owned by the settlements of 'Mitzpe Shalem' and 'Kalia,' to mine and manufacture products that utilize the mud extracted from the occupied Dead Sea area, Israel is openly in violation of its obligations as an Occupying Power in the OPT. It is encouraging and facilitating the exploitation of Palestinian

natural resources and actively assisting their pillaging by private actors, said the release.

It said, third-party States are called on to abide by their international legal obligations and must take concrete measures to pressure Israel to bring to an end its violations of international humanitarian law. In addition, they must refrain from providing any form of assistance to such violations, including by maintaining business relationships with economic actors allegedly involved in pillage in the occupied Dead Sea area.

The European Union (EU) must ensure that only Israeli entities registered and established in Israel and conducting activities in Israel proper, are able to participate in European programmes, and adopt restrictive measures on the import of Israeli products originating from settlements, because of the serious violations of peremptory norms of international law that settlements and their related infrastructure entail, Al-Haq concluded.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20588>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Campaign to Defend Artists Accused of Disturbing Public Order**

Hundreds of artists in Tunisia and abroad have joined a campaign in support of two Tunisian artists facing prison by publishing symbolic mugshots of themselves on line. The campaign is a response to news that Tunisian artists Nadia Jelassi and Mohamed Ben Slama are to face charges of disrupting public order, following the display of their controversial art pieces.

Jelassi is facing prosecution for a sculpture that evokes a stoning scene with busts of veiled women under rocks. Ben Slama, who is currently in France, is also facing prosecution for an installation that involved ants spelling out the words “glory to God.”

When Jelassi was summoned by the investigative judge on August 28, she went through an anthropometric test. She recreated her experience by posting a picture of herself holding a ruler by her face on her Facebook account. A support campaign was then launched by other artists inspired by Jelassi’s depiction of the incident.

Many Tunisian artists have condemned the lawsuit and consider it an attempt at limiting freedom of expression.

“We are all Nadia. It is unbelievable, we never thought that charges would be brought against an artist for being creative, that’s what we do we express ourselves, we do it through our art. I don’t even get what s the crime she is being accused of[...] It is certainly a first. For this to happen after the so-called revolution, it is just shocking,” said Sana Tamzini, artist and director of Belvedere Contemporary Art gallery.

Amor Ghedmasi, secretary general of the Union of Tunisian Plastic Artists, accused what he described as “the Islamist led government of Ennahdha” of wanting to implement a new social vision. “Their intention to do so is no longer in doubt, it is a reality. They want things to regress, they want us to become like Afghanistan. But, it will never happen, that model will never work here, our history has way too many progressive figures for that to happen,” stated Ghedmasi.

Human Rights Watch released a statement today condemning the arrest describing it as a violation of the right to freedom of expression. “Bloggers, journalists and now artists are being prosecuted for exercising their right to free speech,” said Eric Goldstein, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

“It is the state that raised the lawsuit, how outrageous is that, this is not a spontaneous accusation someone is pulling the strings, it is certainly political and artists are paying the price, “ said Tamzini, praising the support campaign for its intelligence and symbolism.

Likewise, Ghedmasi expressed his hope that campaign will influence the public opinion and help raise awareness on the issue.

Jelassi and Ben Slama’s sculptures were exhibited during the Printemps des Art Fair in La Marsa, last June. On the final day of the exhibition protests against a number of artworks led to clashes and the destruction of several pieces. Clashes in the following days resulted in at least one death and the installation of a nighttime curfew in large areas of the country.

Ghedmasi criticized the state’s leniency with those who attacked the gallery. “They didn’t do anything to the Salafists for attacking the place, while they should be the ones facing charges,” he said.

According to article 121 of the Penal Code, Jlassi and Ben Slama could face up to 5 years in prison.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2012/09/03/campaign-to-defend-artists-accused-of-disturbing-public-order/>

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **The Party Just In (and Developing)**

Morocco's Justice and Development Party (PJD) will hold its seventh congress on July 14 and 15 under extraordinary circumstances; for the first time, the PJD will be holding this conference as the ruling party—a new reality that raises many questions about its internal governance. Abdelilah Benkirane is both head of the government and the PJD's secretary-general; many of the party's ten ministers serve at the same time as members of the general secretariat with active portfolios within the organization. Some members have quietly begun discussing the possibility of separating the party's governmental work from its organization, as is done in a number of countries, and this debate will undoubtedly be pushed into the open during the conference.

The conference also takes place amid trying economic times and the public has high expectations that the PJD's participation in the government will bring about tangible economic improvements.

Additionally, the Arab uprisings and elections across the region have focused international scrutiny on the political agendas of Islamist parties. How will this charged atmosphere affect the conference's proceedings, and what outcomes should we expect?

The most publicized item is the election of the secretary-general, and the likeliest outcome is that the party will reelect Benkirane. From the party's perspective, he has successfully led the PJD in the ruling coalition (which includes three other parties), and he has overcome serious political challengers—perhaps the most imposing of which was Fouad Ali al-Himma, a former classmate and close friend of King Mohammed VI who left his job as minister of the interior to run a successful bid for parliament in 2007, and later formed the Party of Authenticity and Modernity (PAM). PAM repeatedly declared its intention to stand up to the PJD, and the PJD accused it of leading a campaign to break up its alliances in the 2009 municipal elections. Benkirane's strident opposition to the PAM consolidated him as an uncontested leader in the eyes of party activists. Today, there are no serious challengers to

Benkirane’s leadership of Justice and Development, but Minister of Foreign Affairs (and former PJD secretary-general) Saad-Eddine El Othmani could have a very narrow chance of reclaiming his former position.

The conference this month will highlight a significant change in the PJD’s political base. Although historically, the PJD has been dominated by educated middle-class engineers, doctors, lawyers, and professors, it is increasingly opening up to and incorporating wealthier businessmen.

Benkirane’s reelection is not necessarily in the bag. As the last conference in 2008 demonstrated, the complicated voting procedures for the office of secretary-general can lead to last-minute surprises. Candidates must endure careful vetting, in which all aspects of the incumbent secretary-general’s performance during his term are openly debated by party leaders as well as its rank-and-file, and conference attendees can change their initial votes. The defeat of Saad-Eddine El Othmani in 2008—even when all bets pointed to his reelection—is an example of such a surprise.

A second key item on the conference docket is the amendment of the party’s structural organization—especially at the level of the general secretariat and the national council—to better separate the PJD’s functions and adapt to the new political reality of governing. There are four proposals to amend party bylaws as well as election procedures for the secretary-general, members of the general secretariat, and the members of the seventh conference’s national council. Two models for the general secretariat are also to be discussed; the first being an “expanded general secretariat” that would include (in addition to the 15 members chosen by the secretary-general and confirmed by the conference) PJD government ministers and high-ranking officials. This would broaden the decision-making and consultation processes, but could also complicate and stall resolutions if not backed with an effective executive apparatus. The second format would have a “political general secretariat” comprised of only 15 members, making political decisions and supported by an efficient executive apparatus. It would be headed by one of the members of the general secretariat assisting the secretary-general—which would streamline the

decision-making process while simultaneously drawing sharp distinction between government work and internal party affairs.

Additionally, the conference will also highlight changes in the PJD's political discourse that reveal its transformation from a party once doomed to be in the opposition to one in power. The party's sixth conference in 2008 adopted the slogan "Democratic Struggle is our Gateway to Reform"—a clear reference to Morocco's political setbacks following the 2007 elections and the marginalization of the opposition. That year witnessed the dissolution of two Islamist political parties al-Badil al-Hadari and al-Umma, as well as the rise of the PAM under al-Himma. Even though PAM had not existed during the 2007 elections, al-Himma was quickly able to amass the largest parliamentary bloc as deputies defected from various other parties.



Benkirane's reelection is not necessarily in the bag. As the last conference in 2008 demonstrated, the complicated voting procedures for the office of secretary-general can lead to last-minute surprises.

Now that the PJD's fortunes have changed, the party has abandoned the word struggle in its slogan for partnership: "Effective Partnership for Democracy Building." The logic behind this shift is dealt with explicitly in a policy paper issued by the conference's organizing committee (though not yet public): first, the monarchy stopped exerting blatant control over parliament as a direct result of PJD resistance and as a side effect of the Arab Spring—though perhaps not for good. Second, the policy paper attributes the motto change to the PJD's newfound role of running the government.

The conference also signals a new opportunity for the party to define itself as markedly distinct from its religious parent organization, the Movement for Unity and Reform (MUR), but still taking pride its Islamist identity. After the officially announced separation in the wake of the Casablanca terrorist attacks of May 2003, both organizations have

worked to differentiate between the PJD’s political work and MUR’s religious activism and education. Since the PJD became the governing party, MUR has further sought to distance itself. Answering recent accusations that MUR was blending religion and politics indiscriminately, its leader Mohammed al-Hamadawi remarked that his movement “would not depart from its religious positions nor become a loyalist group that identifies itself with the government and engages fully in its agenda.”

Finally, the conference this month will highlight a significant change in the PJD’s political base. Although historically, the PJD has been dominated by educated middle-class engineers, doctors, lawyers, and professors, it is increasingly opening up to and incorporating wealthier businessmen. There are signs of a relative breakthrough in the party-business relationship: during its electoral campaign, Justice and Development took the initiative to meet with Mohammed Hourani, director of one of the largest business associations in the country, the Morocco Employers’ Association (CGEM), before any of the other parties did so. Hourani also traveled with Benkirane as

part of the official delegation visiting the Davos Economic Forum. In return, CGEM supported the government with 1.2 billion dirhams (\$150 million) in funding for welfare programs for poor families. Some businessmen, like the prominent left-wing businessman Karim Tazi, also openly backed the PJD during the recent parliamentary elections; Tazi announced his support for the PJD despite obvious ideological differences. Given that Morocco’s uncompetitive economic system is dominated by companies close to power, this openness to the PJD rests on the belief that economic liberalization will (ultimately) benefit the business class. We should not be surprised to see the interests of this private sphere well-represented at the upcoming conference—with some of its members even given the honor of delivering speeches at the inaugural session.

Mohammed Masbah is a Ph. D. candidate in sociology at Mohammad V University in Rabat and a researcher at the Moroccan Center for Contemporary Studies. He was recently a visiting researcher at the Carnegie Endowment's Washington office.

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/03/party-just-in-and-developing/cj2f>

- **Revolutionary military officers to be released: Source**

The military officers who were detained on 8 April 2011 for protesting in Tahrir Square will be released late on Monday, according to wife of Ahmed Shoman, another detained military officer who she said would also be freed

The wife of Ahmed Shoman, an Egyptian military officer who was detained after taking part in protests at Tahrir Square, said her husband and other detained military officers – known as the on 8 April officers – would be released late on Monday.

Mona Salah stated on ONTV satellite channel that she had received a phone call on Monday from a presidential source, who informed her of the news.

Shoman's wife says that the release of her husband will be "considered a victory for the January 25 Revolution."

Shoman is one of dozens of army personnel who have been detained for

joining protesters in Tahrir Square during and after the 2011 uprising.

For his side, lieutenant Ahmed Abu El-Hassan, one of the officers who were arrested on 8 April 2011 but was released in the same month this year along with some of his colleagues, told Ahram Online: "I think five officers will be released on Monday, but they are still in the detention cell.

Around 22 officers were arrested on 8 April 2011 during one of the square's trademark million-man demonstrations, in which protesters attacked the then ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF).

Some of the military officers have already been released, others were given prison sentences or sanctions while the rest are still being tried in military courts.

Officer Shoman, who was given a suspension in rank promotion by the military court, was initially arrested following the departure of former president Hosni Mubarak for his involvement in protests at Tahrir Square in

the days leading up to the president's ouster.

However, under pressure from demonstrators and activists, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) pardoned him a few days later. The then ruling military council issued an official statement later, saying it would no longer tolerate such acts.

Shoman, however, opted to join protests in Tahrir Square again on 22 November, during the violent clashes between protesters and Egypt's security forces in Mohamed Mahmoud Street, and thus was arrested again.

The court charged Shoman with several offences, including undisciplined military behaviour, filming videos while wearing military uniform and publishing them via various media, absence from his unit, neglecting to obey military orders and stating political views through satellite channels.

Shoman's wife stressed that her husband got involved in the protest to show his support and solidarity with his colleagues,

who withstood the Mohamed Mahmoud clashes.

These clashes left dozens killed and hundreds injured as civilians and security forces faced off after police personnel had tried to forcibly disperse a sit-in in Tahrir.

Retired General Tarek Wadia, father of Mohamed Wadia, one of detained officers, said that he met with Amr El-Laithy, member of the presidential advisory council, who denied knowing the date of his son's release on the same satellite television show.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/51941/Egypt/Politics-/Revolutionary-military-officers-to-be-released-Sou.aspx>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

• **Cut It Out: Censorship in Lebanon**

The movie theatre of the Beirut City Center International media attention given to Lebanese censorship usually focuses on the banning of Western films, like The Da Vinci Code or the animated Persepolis. But the real victims of the

Directorate for General Security (DGSG, from Direction Générale de la Sûreté Générale) and its zealous censors are local film and theater directors, who face an often arduous process to secure permits for filming, screening, or staging creative works. DGSG's follows its own internal mandate, and its directives can be stretched in any direction: censors decree that creative works should not "pose any danger or harm to Lebanon," nor should they upset "political or military sensitivities" or incite "sectarian or factional discord." Unlike cases of paper publications, the censorship process for local film and theater unfolds entirely outside the courts. While publications can only be censored if a lawsuit is brought against them (and authors and journalists can defend themselves in the Court of Publications), directors cannot question or appeal the General Directorate's decision to bowdlerize or entirely ban their work.

In recent years, local civil society organizations have begun to speak up against this practice; these voices seek not only to curb censorship, but to limit the DGSG's extensive powers and curb its considerable autonomy from even the ministers of the interior, who have thus

far been unable to assert control over it, particularly in matters of censorship.

Last year, a coalition of the major cultural organizations in Lebanon (such as Metropolis DC, Ashkal Alwan, Né à Beyrouth, among others) grouped under Marsad al-Raqaba ("The Censorship Observatory"), and organized the first collective effort to provide a comprehensive assessment of censorship exercised by state institutions. Led by prominent human rights lawyer Nizar Saghieh, the Observatory's research exposed the degree to which political and religious leaders are directly involved in censorship cases. It documented how the General Directorate's censorship department routinely sends films and other creative works that might upset religious institutions to these bodies (like Dar al-Fatwa, the highest Sunni religious authority, or the Catholic Information Center), and almost always complies with their wishes on whether to excise scenes or ban a work altogether. In May, for example, following a request from the Catholic Information Center, the DGSG asked that Joe Bou Eid's Tannoura Maxi remove certain scenes that were allegedly "offensive to Christianity."

Similarly, individual political figures are also routinely consulted on creative works that mention them or their parties. Films on the civil war have been routinely censored since the nineties on the basis that references to the conflict “threatens civil peace.” In actuality, however, it only threatens the peace of mind of the warlords who are still in power. For example, Randa Shahal, who represents an older generation of Lebanese directors who tackled the civil war, saw many of her films brutally cut—the most famous of which is *A Civilized People* (1999). Simon El Habre was forced to excise six minutes of his 2009 documentary *One Man Village* (the banned scene can be viewed here) because it mentioned the role of the Progressive Socialist Party during the civil war. Last year, Danielle Arbid’s film *Beirut Hotel* was banned because it referred to the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Marsad Al-Raqaba’s efforts have been followed by others. Encouraged by the region’s year of uprisings, activists have acquired an increasingly diminishing tolerance for security forces’ control over creative expression. Only last week, the

Skeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom (SKeyes)—an organization established in 2007 by the Samir Kassir Foundation to monitor and publicize violations of freedom of the press and artistic expression in the Levant—launched *Mamnou3* (“Prohibited”), a mockumentary series that parodies the internal workings of the DGSG’s censorship department. In one clip, an officer of the Directorate smiles smugly as he edits a famous theater director’s script, pleased with his own creativity in altering the text to suit “public morals.” Since Lebanon lacks Internet regulation, SKeyes hopes to avoid a possible ban by focusing the campaign online and promoting it via social media platforms. Although it is too early to gauge whether *Mamnou3* will provoke a backlash from the General Directorate, the campaign has already received considerable media attention in Lebanon and beyond, and the first three episodes released on YouTube have already attracted almost 11,000 views in the week since their release. Seven additional episodes are planned.

Both SKeyes and Marsad Al-Raqaba call for ending the General Directorate’s lack of oversight and establishing instead an

independent regulatory body to apply a rating system for films or plays. The new body would also receive complaints after works have been screened or staged and rule on whether or not the work should be censored—rather than the current practice of censoring a film or play while still under production.



Daunting challenges remain, and a number of forces impede progress: an intransigent political class, aggressive security forces unwilling to surrender arbitrary powers, and conservative citizens who worry about uncensored creative expression. Civil society organizations will have to put aside their differences and work harder at coordinating their efforts—much like the defenders of censorship have; in the early 2000s, religious leaders established the Commission to Preserve Values in an effort to monitor media ethics and morals. The organization has made a number of complaints to the office of the public

prosecutor regarding scantily clad women in TV programs and on billboards, and has called on the state to preserve “people’s dignity” and to censor TV programs, films and publications. In its most recent statement on May 23, the commission called on the media to practice self-censorship and on the government to ensure media compliance with ethical standards. Significantly, the statement began by describing the military establishment as the “custodian” of Lebanon—linking between censorship and the security forces.

Despite this, there remains much hope. In the past two years, thanks to Marsad al-Raqaba’s efforts, the previously-opaque censoring process is much clearer—and knowledge of it is half the battle. A number of government officials have lent their support; former Minister of Culture Tarek Mitri’s pressure helped to reverse the ban on the film version of Persepolis (which had been banned because it allegedly displeased the head of DGSG General Wafiq Jizzini—who is purportedly close to Hezbollah). Former Minister of the Interior Ziad Baroud also tried to stop the DGSG from cutting the scene mentioned above from One Man Village.

Mitri has also been a vocal supporter of abolishing pre-production censorship to allow films and all cultural products to circulate freely.

And as the ongoing Mamnou3 campaign itself shows, creative expression is alive and kicking in Lebanon—as are creative ways around the censors’ excisions.

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<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2012/07/12/cut-it-out-censorship-in-lebanon/covt>

- **Jordan’s Ongoing Election Law Battle**

Following a series of Arab Spring-inspired reforms, Jordan’s parliament passed a new electoral law on June 19, paving the way for elections to be held by the end of this year. The vote was not without contention. In a manifestation emblematic of the larger debate raging over the type

of electoral system the legislature should adopt, 20 MPs threatened to resign—two even came to blows—over the proposed law. Hours after it was approved, leader of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Hamza Mansour dismissed it as “just a cosmetic change meant to buy time and insufficient for real reforms.”

Opposition parties have long called for amending the “single non-transferable vote” (SNTV) system in place since 1993, on the basis that (among other shortcomings) it benefits tribal nominees rather than those affiliated with a party. Unlike most electoral systems, SNTV combines multimember districts with the rule that a single vote is cast for a particular candidate, which often results in candidates winning seats with the support of only a small minority of the voting population.

Under the new law, the electorate will have two votes: one for candidates competing under the old (SNTV) system at the district level, and another for candidates competing under a proportional electoral system at the national level. While the institution of a proportional system will promote gains for

parties rather than tribes, the opposition still threatens to boycott the elections because only 17 seats (or 12 percent) of the now 140-seat parliament will be elected on this basis.

In response to the threat of a boycott, on June 29 King Abdullah asked the parliament to convene an extraordinary session to reconsider the election law, and on July 4 the government proposed increasing the number of seats designated to the newly instated national proportional system to 27 (or about 19 percent). The IAF swiftly rejected this proposal; it seeks to have at least 30 percent of the seats be contested under this system. However, it remains to be seen if the party will announce an official boycott of the elections.

Although the main debate is over the electoral system, the new law also introduces two other significant changes. First, members of the security forces will be allowed to vote for the first time. According to a conservative estimate of this demographic published on the government's website, this could affect approximately 10 percent of the country's total vote (based on the number of voters

in the 2010 elections). Considering that these individuals rely on the regime for their livelihoods and tend to come from tribal backgrounds (Jordanians of Palestinian background are not eligible to hold positions in the army), they are unlikely to vote for the opposition. Moreover, three more seats for women from Bedouin districts will be added, giving these already overrepresented tribal districts even more power in the parliament.

The SNTV system presents a number of problems for large parties with regionally dispersed support, like the Muslim Brotherhood's IAF. The framework makes it difficult for parties to know the optimal number of candidates to run, as well as for voters to coordinate their votes. In each district, a party would want to run as many candidates as it believes it can win seats for; no more, because this will split its vote too thinly, resulting in none of its representatives being elected, and no less, so as to maximize the number of MPs. Trouble can arise, however, if party supporters fail to spread out their votes evenly among candidates; if, for example, all voters flock to the top nominee, that representative will emerge with more

than enough votes to win, and too few votes will remain to support other party candidates.

Additionally, the SNTV system is easily gerrymandered. The regime created large, multi-member districts in opposition party strongholds to magnify the problems of electoral strategy and voter coordination. The more seats a party expects to win within a single district, the more difficult these problems are to overcome—and the more likely that the party will win fewer seats than it could have under a proportional system. Voter representation among districts in Jordan has historically been very disproportionate, with more seats allocated to areas that are regime-loyal and fewer ones apportioned where Islamists and Jordanians of Palestinian origin reside. In the last election (2010) the most underrepresented district had just over 46,000 voters per MP—while the most overrepresented had less than 8,000.

Given that the regime has information on the sizes and distribution of the various tribal populations, it is able to carve out districts tailored to the electoral success of the tribes that make up the backbone

of its support. Tribes can be likened to small, well-disciplined parties; tribal voters are honor-bound to support family members in elections and often hold primaries to select candidates and coordinate their votes for the actual election; tribes also tend to be small enough to nominate only one or two candidates. These factors help to solve the problem of vote-splitting among the multiple contenders that larger political factions face.

Finally, the SNTV system pushes candidates to cultivate a “personal vote.”¹ When asked what their daily job entails, Jordanian MPs typically provide three answers: 1) the passing of legislation, 2) the monitoring of ministry budgets and affairs, and 3) the providing of personal services to their constituents. This last item creates conflict of interest in carrying out the first two duties of parliamentary office; MPs often end up trading approval of legislation, budgets, and other ministry affairs for personal favors on behalf of their constituents. Many MPs are also tied to their tribes back home by the same honor code that elected them, which requires that they provide for the welfare of their clans. For a political party like the

IAF, which lacks access to the particular governmental benefits enjoyed by tribal candidates, it is difficult to compete against this dynamic.



Given these disadvantages, it is not surprising that the IAF has boycotted the majority of elections run under the SNTV system. The party's preference is to return to the "block vote" system of 1989, in which each voter has multiple votes in multi-member districts, but can only vote for each candidate one time. This system often results in giving the group with the largest and most well-organized support base more seats than it deserves under strictly proportional rules. For example, in the 1989 elections, the Brotherhood won about 20 percent of the vote but took close to 30 percent of the parliamentary seats, while tribal candidates won around 60 percent of the vote but were rewarded with only about 40 percent of the seats. While this system is a bit complicated at times—imagine selecting nine different

candidates to vote for in Irbid—it encourages the electorate to support candidates based on impersonal qualifications.

The national proportional system mitigates most of the problems of both the SNTV and bloc vote systems in Jordan. Yet, of serious concern is the lack of well-organized parties in the country besides the Brotherhood. There is no party list restriction on candidates running in the national proportional system, and large tribes that cross district boundaries still have a good chance of picking up some of these new seats. It remains to be seen whether or not the new electoral law will actually lead to a meaningful change in Jordanian parliamentary politics.

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[1] This logic comes from: Carey, John M. and Matther Soberg Shugart. 1995. "Incentives to Cultivate a Personal Vote: A Rank Ordering of Electoral Formulas." *Electoral Studies*. 14 (4): 417-439.

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/07/05/jordan-s-ongoing-election-law-battle/ck59>

- **Hezbollah denies possessing chemical weapons**

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah on Monday denied that his group possessed chemical weapons.

"We don't have chemical weapons and we cannot use them for reasons linked to the Sharia and for humanitarian reasons," Nasrallah said in an interview with Beirut-based Al-Mayadeen channel.

At the end of July, a number of Israeli officials warned against a possible transfer of Syrian chemical weapons to Hezbollah, an ally of Damascus.

The Syrian regime, gripped by an unprecedented revolt for 18 months, admitted in July for the first time that it possessed chemical weapons and threatened to use them in the event of foreign military intervention.



Nasrallah, who rarely grants interviews, said that in the case of "enemy attacks" against Lebanon, Hezbollah would not be content to "defend itself" but would "enter [Israel's] Galilee."

In February 2011, the armed movement threatened to invade this region of northern Israel in the event of an Israeli attack.

Following Hezbollah's abduction of two Israeli soldiers on the border, the Israeli army launched an offensive into Lebanon in July and August 2006 to punish a movement that managed to fire 4,000 rockets into northern Israel.

While ruling out a future Israeli war against Iran, the sponsor of Hezbollah, Nasrallah said he had information from Iranian leaders that "the retaliation from Tehran will be great" in the event of an Israeli attack.

"Iran will not be conciliatory in the case of a strike against its nuclear facilities," he said, indicating that the Islamic Republic could even retaliate by targeting "American bases in the region."

He also said that the only solution for the Syrian conflict was dialogue.

"A solution [for the] Syria [conflict] cannot be reached unless there is a ceasefire [followed] by dialogue between all Syrian factions."

Nasrallah also said that the events in Syria sought to make Arabs forget about the Palestinian cause.

"The world is busy with the events surrounding [Lebanon], while Israel is taking over more Palestinian land, especially from [Jerusalem]."

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

6. SYRIA

- **The soundtrack of the Syrian revolution**

It's more of an incantation than a song but it's as ubiquitous as the sound of gunfire on Syria's frontlines and has become the undisputed anthem of the revolution.

"Yalla erhal ya Bashar" (It's time to leave, Bashar). In Syria's rebel-held areas, the words are spray-painted on walls, blared on minibus radios and exchanged as mobile phone ringtones.

Huddled fighters intone the song-cum-slogan as a battle cry before mounting military operations against Syrian army forces.

And in the liturgy of Syria's street protests, demonstrators chant it to open and close marches against the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

"Get out Bashar!", demands the song, a rageful drumroll of attacks calling the Syrian president a "liar" and an "ass" and his brother Maher a "coward."

Its creator paid dearly, however. Ibrahim Qashush, a singer from the central city of Hama, was little-known before the Arab Spring reached Syria in March 2011.

A few months later, a shaky recording of the nagging mantra performed by Qashush and echoed by a chorus of demonstrators at a night protest in Hama went viral on the Internet.

"You have lost your legitimacy... Freedom is within reach... The martyrs' blood doesn't come cheap," says the song, whose unlikely rhymes never fail to trigger laughter. It even pokes fun at Assad's slight lisp.

Qashush was soon arrested and his body was reported to have been found in a river in July last year.

The man nicknamed "the mocking bird of the revolution" had had his throat slit and vocal chords ripped out.

In many Syrian towns where anti-regime protests carry on, organizers call themselves Qashush in a homage to the slain activist.

"His song gives us courage... Ibrahim Qashush holds a special place in people's hearts, I think," said one of the organizers of a recent rally in the town of Marea, north of Aleppo in northwestern Syria.

"The Free Syrian Army is made up of normal people like me, who have families and jobs. There are not many heroes but we have our guardian angel: Ibrahim Qashush," said the young man, who gave his name as Mohamed Qashush.

In the disputed Aleppo neighborhood of Jdeideh, Abu Mohammed, a veteran commander who defected from the army three years ago and returned from exile to join the rebellion last year, likes to tease regime soldiers with the song.

In the ancient district's maze of narrow windy streets, enemy positions are sometimes 30 yards apart, literally within shouting distance.

After checking the soldiers' position by using a small mirror to peek around the street corner, Abu Mohamed wheeled out a speaker, stuck his mobile against the microphone and played the rebel anthem full blast.

"Maybe they're afraid or maybe they cannot defect, but I'm sure they enjoy listening to this," he said, raising his eyebrows and turning an ear towards the

army checkpoint as if he expected a sign of appreciation.

"The words are very simple. I think every Syrian can relate to them. The regime has tanks and helicopters and lots of weapons we don't have. But we have this music... that's why I like to play it during the fighting."

If the Syrian revolution had a soundtrack, "Yalla erhal ya Bashar" would be the theme song but anti-regime music has flourished over the past year.

"This is my favorite time of the day," said Abadllah, a Free Syrian Army fighter, as he flicked his laptop open and sprawled on a foam mattress in his brother's empty home in central Aleppo.

"This one always makes me cry," he said, putting on a song entitled "Ya Hef" (Oh Shame), another revolution favorite written by Samih Shuqeir, a well-known Syrian singer exiled in Paris.

The anti-regime repertoire flooding the Internet includes everything from a rap remix of Qashush's song to heart-wrenching tales of bereavement mixing in

sound bites from orphaned children backed by Arab orchestras heavy on whining violins.

The revolt has forced Syria's celebrities to take a public stand and some of the Arab world's best loved artists who chose to extoll the virtues of Bashar and his regime, like actress Raghda, are now hate figures in rebel strongholds.

Conversely, a star singer like Asala unexpectedly announced she was siding with the rebels and has since been touring the world to raise funds for the revolution.

One of the most popular figures among Syrian rebels is Abdelbaset Saroot, the goalkeeper of Syria's football youth team who joined the armed struggle.

An injury sustained during clashes with the army might jeopardize his future in sport but his song "Have you no pity?" is a hit and a new career beckons.

"You know, when your lips have been sewn shut for so long, people want to sing," said Abdallah. "They want to shout."

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

- **NLP leader lambasts Syrian envoy**

National Liberal Party leader MP Dori Chamoun slammed Syrian Ambassador to Lebanon Ali Abdul Karim Ali, saying the latter was acting as if he was former Syrian Intelligence chief in Lebanon Ghazi Kanaan's successor.

"Diplomatic ties have rules and principles," Chamoun told Kuwaiti Al-Anbaa newspaper in an interview published Tuesday, adding that the Syrian envoy "is [committing violations] and considers himself Ghazi Kanaan's successor."

"This [type of political] practice ended in Lebanon," he said in reference to the way the Syrian regime was ruling Lebanon before it pulled out its troops from the country by the end of April 2005.

Demonstrations were held in Lebanon last week during which young protesters called for expelling the Syrian envoy.

Politicians affiliated with the Western-backed March 14 have also demanded that the Syrian Ambassador be dismissed especially after the arrest of former Information Minister Michel Samaha, who is close to the Syrian regime.

Turing to Lebanese-Syrian agreements, Chamoun said they only served Syria's interests and called for "annulling" the conventions "because of Syria's interference and attacks on Lebanon."

Syrian troops have conducted a number of incursions into Lebanese territory, some of which have been fatal. A number of Lebanese nationals have also been kidnapped along the border by Syrian forces.

As for the intermittent violence in North Lebanon's Tripoli, the NLP said it was linked to the Syrian events.

"When [violent events] end in Syria they will cease in Lebanon."

At least 15 people were killed in fighting between pro- and anti-Syrian factions in Tripoli in August.

[http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?
D=125478](http://www.nowlebanon.com/Sub.aspx?D=125478)

- **Syria opposition pleads for arms, intervention**

Syria's main opposition group pleaded Monday for weapons and urgent military intervention to defend civilians from bombardments by President Bashar al-Assad's army.

"We need a humanitarian intervention and we are asking for military intervention for the Syrian civilians," Syrian National Council leader Abdel Basset Sayda said after meeting Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo.

"I have the duty of asking for weapons that will allow us to defend against the Syrian armor and weapons that are killing civilians all the time," he told a joint news conference.

Sayda said the Syrian conflict had now killed 30,000 people and forced millions from their homes, including more than three million internal refugees and 250,000 who had fled the country. Another 100,000 had been detained.

"Every day we have dozens of martyrs and hundreds of wounded and disappeared," he said in Arabic, addressing journalists through a translator.

"We are seeking very quick action by the international community," he said.

Syria's opposition believed the European Union could persuade Russia to change its posture at the UN Security Council so as to establish safe havens for refugees, Sayda said.

Russia, an ally of the Assad regime, and the Security Council's other veto-wielding members have failed to reach agreement on a proposal to set up protected enclaves for displaced civilians, which would imply authorizing a highly controversial protective military operation.

Following criticism that the SNC was not sufficiently representative, Sayda vowed to call a national dialogue so as to forge a unified position on a post-Assad transition to democracy.

"Syria is a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional country and everyone will have a part in its future. We want everything to be

organized according to this principle," he said.

A spokesperson for the SNC told AFP on Sunday that the group had agreed to expand its membership and would hold a vote later in September to elect its leadership.

Sayda's mandate, which was due to expire on September 9, had been extended until the leadership vote, he said.

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

- **Syria says Egypt's Mursi is 'Mubarak with beard'**

Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi gets ready for a picture after arriving in Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran. During his speech in the summit he criticized the Syrian regime for being "unethical" in killing civilians. (Reuters)

Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi gets ready for a picture after arriving in Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran. During his speech in the summit he criticized the Syrian regime for being "unethical" in killing civilians. (Reuters)

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By Al Arabiya with agencies

Syria hit back at Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi on Monday, saying his Islamist beard is the only thing that distinguishes him from the veteran strongman he replaced after last year's Arab Spring uprising.

Responding to high-profile criticism from Mursi at a Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran last week, Information Minister Omran al-Zohbi charged that the Egyptian leader was complicit in the armed revolt rocking his country.

"He is responsible for spilling Syrian blood, as are the Qataris, the Saudis and the Turks," Zohbi said.

"The only difference between him and (ousted strongman Hosni) Mubarak is that he has a beard."

The Syrian government prides itself on its secularism. The Muslim Brotherhood, for which Mursi successfully ran for Egypt's presidency earlier this year, has long been outlawed in Syria on pain of death. It is

one of the most powerful factions within the opposition Syrian National Council.

Mursi caused a storm on Thursday when, on the first visit to Iran by an Egyptian leader in decades, he slammed Syria's regime as "oppressive" and urged support for rebels seeking President Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

"Our solidarity with the struggle of Syrians against an oppressive regime that has lost its legitimacy is an ethical duty, and a political and strategic necessity," he said.

As violence continued in Syria Monday, Russia, a strong ally to Syria, issued a strongly worded statement expressing its "deep concern" at a warning that Syrian rebels plan to target civilian airports in Damascus and Aleppo from Tuesday.

"In Moscow we have seen with deep concern the statements distributed in the media by representatives of the so-called Free Syria Army that international civilian airports of Damascus and Aleppo are from now on seen as military targets," the Russian foreign ministry on Monday said in a statement.

State-owned RIA Novosti news agency on Friday reported on a rebel statement cited by London-based Asharq al-Awsat newspaper saying Damascus and Aleppo airports and commercial flights would be targeted from Tuesday because they were being used for military aviation.

"We consider such threats absolutely unacceptable," the Russian foreign ministry said.

"From a moral and legal point of view this means the opposition's critical proximity to a red line, beyond which are acts that are no different from the crimes of Al-Qaeda."

"The most recent statement by the Free Syria Army essentially confirms that terrorism is turning into one of its main methods of activity," the ministry added.

Russia called for "taking action on the leaders of the Free Syria Army in the most decisive manner to exclude such threats, not to mention their being carried out," and reiterated calls for Russians to avoid travel to Syria.

Rebel forces have increasingly targeted the Syrian regime's military air power and claimed to have shot down a MiG fighter jet and destroyed a dozen aircraft on the ground last week.

Russia continues to lobby for a short-lived agreement struck by world powers in Geneva on June 30 calling for a rapid ceasefire and supports a move towards a transition government that would decide President Bashar al-Assad's future.

On Monday, the opposition group, the Local Coordination Committees, reported that more than 200 people were killed especially in Aleppo across Syria by the security forces.

Western powers are also preparing a tough response if Assad's regime deploys chemical or biological weapons in its civil war, key European officials warned Monday.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/03/235914.html>

- **CIA chief visits Turkey to discuss region especially Syria: official**

CIA chief David Petraeus is visiting Turkey for meetings on regional issues, a U.S. official told AFP on Monday.

The official would not say with whom the CIA chief would be meeting and where.

According to local media, Petraeus arrived in Istanbul on Sunday and his meetings with Turkish officials on Monday would focus on the Syrian crisis and anti-terror fight.



Turkish and U.S. officials last month held their first operational planning meeting aimed at bringing about the end of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's embattled regime.

During that meeting, the two parties discussed contingency plans in the case of potential threats including a chemical attack by Assad's regime, as well as the threat of armed groups including

outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and al-Qaeda which could exploit a power vacuum in Syria.

This is the second visit to Turkey by the CIA chief who held closed-door talks with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkish intelligence chief Hakan Fidan in March.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/03/235872.html>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Iran ready to help defuse crisis in Bahrain: Salehi**



TEHRAN – Iran has announced to Bahrain officials that it is ready to help the Arab country extricate

itself from crisis, according to Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi.

“In the Mecca summit, the Bahraini king (Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah) requested talks with Iranian officials. This was done, and I, as Iran’s foreign minister, met with him,” Salehi said during an interview with Al-Alam News Network published on Monday, referring to an emergency Islamic summit that was held in Mecca on August 14 and 15.

“We do not intend to interfere in the internal affairs of any country. We told the Bahraini king that in the report of (Mahmoud) Cherif Bassiouni, who had been appointed by him as chairman of the fact-finding committee, it had been stated that Iran had not interfered in Bahrain’s internal affairs,” he stated.

Salehi added, “We have repeatedly announced our stance toward Bahrain clearly. We are keen (to see) the restoration of peace and security in Bahrain and recognize the country’s national sovereignty, and our diplomatic relations still exist.”

“However, currently, there are certain problems in Bahrain. Like in Syria, we have called on the (government) in Bahrain to fulfill legitimate public demands,” he said.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/101196-iran-has-announced-readiness-to-help-defuse-crisis-in-bahrain-salehi>

- **Saudi police arrests wanted Shiite, rights activists say**

Saudi security forces have arrested a man who figured on a list of 23 wanted people for causing trouble in the mostly-Shiite Qatif district, rights activists said Monday.

A police squad arrested Hussein Hasan Ali Al-Rabie in the village of Awamiya late on Sunday, said activists who did not want to be named. There was no official confirmation of the arrest.

Rabie was fourth on a list of 23 wanted people announced by the Interior Ministry earlier this year. His arrest reduces the number of those remaining at large to 13, after five others were arrested.

Four others turned themselves in when the list was announced in January and were later released.

The ministry had said those wanted were responsible for the trouble that hit Qatif, in the oil-rich Eastern Province, last year.

The group is accused mainly of "possessing illegal firearms and opening fire on the public and police, in addition to using innocent people as shields," the interior ministry had then said.

They were suspected of taking part in "mobs, blocking traffic [and] damaging public and private property" during sporadic confrontations between police and Shiite protesters.

Confrontations have intensified recently between police and protesters from the Sunni-dominated kingdom's marginalized Shiites – estimated at about two million and mostly concentrated in Eastern Province.

A policeman and an armed protester were killed in clashes in early August, as a security patrol came under heavy gunfire from four armed rioters on motorbike in Qatif, the Interior Ministry said.

Two Shiite protesters were killed in July, triggering attacks on government buildings in Qatif.

In May, Amnesty International said seven people had been killed and a number of others injured in clashes between the authorities and protesters in the region since November.

Qatif witnessed a spate of demonstrations after an outbreak of violence between Shiite pilgrims and religious police in the Muslim holy city of Medina in February 2011.

The protests escalated when the kingdom led a force of Gulf troops into neighboring Bahrain the following month to help crush a Shiite-led uprising against the Sunni monarchy.

Rights groups say more than 600 people from Qatif have been arrested since Spring 2011, but most of them were released.

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

- **Iran: Gulf states deflecting from domestic 'realities'**

Gulf Arab states accusing Iran of meddling in their internal affairs are trying to deflect attention from civil movements protesting for more rights, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Tuesday.

"Repeating these claims will not change the realities in the region," Ramin Mehmanparast said in a statement relayed by Iranian media.

"These kind of claims are old and have no use, and rather it is more about escaping responding to the social demands of the people than being based on realities," he added.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, which groups Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, on Sunday reiterated its allegation of Iranian "interference" in some of their internal issues.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have repeatedly claimed that Iran is involved in Shiite protests in their countries.

Saudi Arabia last year came to Bahrain's aid by sending troops to help in a deadly crackdown on Shiite-led pro-democracy demonstrations, and Riyadh is also grappling with Shiite unrest in its oil-rich Eastern Province.

The GCC also again voiced its backing of the UAE in a dispute with Iran over three Gulf islands claimed by both countries.

Mehmanparast dismissed the island issue, saying: "The islands of Abu Musa, and Greater and Lesser Tunbs are inseparable parts of the Islamic Republic of Iran and will remain forever Iranian."

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

- **Two prominent Saudi human rights activists on trial in Riyadh**

The trial of two leading human rights activists in Saudi Arabia will reportedly resume late this week following its start Saturday, as the pair face charges that could send them to jail for several years.

Saudi nationals Mohammed Fahad al-Qahtani and Abdullah al-Hamid face a series of charges, including founding an

unlicensed civil rights organization and breaking allegiance to the country's rulers.

The opening hearing in Riyadh's specialized criminal court was heavily attended by activists and friends of Qahtani and Hamid, who are both members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA).

Qahtani, an economics professor, is one the most vocal critics of the Saudi government. In 2009, he co-founded ACPRA, an unlicensed organization where Hamid is a prominent member.

"We have been doing our work for several years. The authorities kept quiet for a long time, but now they are coming after us hard," Qahtani told the BBC after the Saturday hearing. "We are not going to be silent. We will continue to do our work."

At the opening hearing, Hamid and Qahtani each read their defense statements to the court, but the presiding judge reportedly told them that their statements were not sufficient as a response to the charges against them.

The judge asked them both to submit revised versions of their statements the next day, and Qahtani has said via his Twitter account the next hearing will take place in September 8.

Some attendees posted updates and photos from the court room to Twitter and Facebook, an unusual occurrence in Saudi Arabia, where similar trials have typically been held behind closed doors.

A number of activists and supporters filled the small court room, according to Saudi journalist Iman al-Qahtani (no relation to Mohammed), who used her Twitter account to report from there.

“I was asked by a soldier not to take photos,” she said. However a number of images and accounts of proceedings appeared online, posted by many of the others in attendance.

According to Iman’s tweets, the judge ordered those using cell phones to leave the court room, threatening to arrest any who refused to leave.

According to the public prosecution memo against Hamid that was published online, he is accused of spreading chaos, destabilizing public order, attempting to impede development in the country and questioning the integrity of official clerics by accusing them of being tools for the royal family.

Similar charges were issued against Qahtani. If convicted, the pair would reportedly face up to five years in prison.

Hamid, or Abu Bilal as he likes to be called, is a reform activist who has been jailed repeatedly for calling for a constitutional monarchy in Saudi Arabia.

Recent cases against Qahtani and other activists have been heavily criticized by international human rights organizations. Amnesty International called in June for the case against Qahtani to be thrown out of court.

“The trial of Mohammad al-Qahtani is just one of a troubling string of court cases aimed at silencing the Kingdom’s human rights activists,” said Philip Luther, Director of Amnesty International’s

Middle East and North Africa Program, in a statement.

“This must come to an end and human rights defenders must be allowed to carry on their crucial work to expose human rights violations and call for justice and accountability.”

Mohammed al-Bejadi, another founding member of ACPRA, received a four-year jail sentence in April on similar charges.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/09/03/235859.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Afghan Leader Names Appointees To Key Security Portfolios

By Abubakar Siddique

September 3, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai has named appointees to be the new ministers of defense and interior, and head of intelligence.

All the appointees are well-known government loyalists and officials, leading some observers to describe the changes as a mere reshuffling and a continuation of policies that have held sway in Kabul for years.

Afghan media on September 3 quoted an unnamed presidential adviser as confirming that former Interior Minister Bismillah Mohammadi had been appointed defense minister.

The official said Deputy Interior Minister Ghulam Mujtaba Patang had been appointed interior minister, and former Frontiers Minister Asadullah Khalid was appointed new intelligence chief.

Former Kabul Governor Din Mohammad was named the new minister of frontiers.

Mohammadi and former Defense Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak were ousted last month after parliament faulted them for failing to protect the border from attacks originating in Pakistan. Karzai last week dismissed intelligence chief Rahmatullah Nabil.

'Reshuffle, Nothing More'

Mohammadi, Khalid, and Mohammad are all considered close to Karzai, serving in a variety of ministerial and provincial governor posts during the past decade. Patang is a professional police officer and is not known for deep factional association.

The appointees were expected to be introduced to parliament on September 3 for approval.

Attiquallah Ammarkhel, a former Afghan military officer, says the nominations represent a continuation of past practices of closed-door deal-making, intrigues involving factional rivalries, and promotion of personal favorites.

Ammarkhel says the Karzai administration remains inherently weak, trapped between competing factions and regional strongmen.

He says the persistent struggle between factions and personalities has contributed to preventing the U.S.-backed government from delivering on promises to provide security, economic development, and good governance.

"All the major problems [the Afghans face] are unimportant for this government. They are merely engaging in filling up top posts to please certain individuals. They are not even paying any attention to the constitution they had crafted," Ammarkhel says.

"I can tell you bluntly, these appointments are not going to resolve the fundamental problems of Afghanistan."

He notes that corruption and inefficiency are often the result of this style of governing.

Karzai has repeatedly promised to clean up corruption -- but analysts say there have been few results from his initiatives.

According to Transparency International, a global corruption watchdog, Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

With reporting by dpa and AP

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

- **Coalition Forces in Afghanistan Work to Prevent Insider Attacks**

Sharon Behn

VOA News

September 3, 2012

ISLAMABAD — Coalition forces in Afghanistan say they are looking for ways to prevent so-called green-on-blue attacks, in which Afghan security forces turn their weapons on international troops.

International Forces spokesman Brigadier General Gunter Katz says several measures are being considered to put an end to the string of fatal insider attacks.

Those measures include enhancing the exchange of intelligence between the international and Afghan forces, more cultural training of both sides, and more counter-intelligence personnel within the Afghan National Security Forces.

“We are confident that those measures will contribute to the mitigation of insider threat incidents, and let me just reiterate that our campaign is on track and will not be affected,” said Katz.

About 45 international troops have been killed by insider attacks in Afghanistan this year. The attacks have thrown into question the ability of Afghan and coalition forces to work together as the country transitions to Afghan control.

Combat coalition troops are due to leave Afghanistan by the end of 2014.

Insider attacks have been blamed on militants infiltrating Afghan forces or on cultural differences settled with guns.

The U.S. military last week temporarily halted the training of 1,000 Afghan Local Police in order to improve their vetting procedures.

Afghan analyst Ahmad Idriss Rahmani says the results of this training have been mixed. “In southeast and south, there have been quite positive developments as these forces have been able to push back insurgents from communities,” he stated. “But in other places, like north, there has been miserable developments because lots of criminals have joined the forces.”

Rahmani, who heads a research center in Kabul, said Afghan police officers are starting to profile police recruits and constantly check on them to see if they are being influenced or intimidated by militants.

General Katz said the training of Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army, which is under the lead of the coalition forces, is not affected by the suspension.

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

- **Afghan soldier kills 2 US-led troopers in Laghman**

Press TV
September 3, 2012

An Afghan soldier has killed two US-led troopers in an attack in Laghman Province in eastern Afghanistan.

A member of the Afghan National Army on Monday turned his weapon on the US-led soldiers in Laghman province in the latest instance of what is commonly referred to as 'green-on-blue' or 'insider' attacks.

The US-led NATO military alliance, however, has not commented on the incident yet and the nationalities of the slain soldiers remain unknown.

According to a count by the International Security Assistance Force for Afghanistan, the so-called green-on-blue attacks, in which Afghan soldiers turn their weapons against their foreign allies, have killed a total of 45 US-led foreign soldiers in the country this year, up from 35 deaths in 2011 overall.

The United States has stopped training Afghan forces due to the rising incidents of the insider attacks in Afghanistan.

US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta expressed deep concerns about the growing number of the insider attacks against the US-led forces, urging Afghan President Hamid Karzai to take necessary measures to curb the assaults.

Some analysts believe the maltreatment of Afghan military forces by American officers is the main reason behind the insider attacks in the war-ravaged country.

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

- **US-led soldier killed in southern Afghanistan**

Press TV
September 3, 2012

An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast in the restive southern Afghanistan has killed one US-led trooper with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

“An International Security Assistance Force service member died following an improvised explosive device attack in southern Afghanistan today,” ISAF announced in a statement on Monday.

ISAF, however, did not disclose the nationalities of the slain foreign soldier or further details of the incident.

According to official figures released by the website icasualties.org, the latest death brings to 323 the number of foreign soldiers killed in Afghanistan since the beginning of this year.

The high number of military casualties in Afghanistan has intensified opposition in the United States and other members of

the Western military alliance against the protracted war in the country.

The United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 under the pretext of combating terrorism.

The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but years into the invasion, insecurity continue to rise across the country despite the presence of thousands of foreign troops in the war-weary nation.

The US-led war in Afghanistan, which has caused record-high civilian and military casualties, has become the longest military conflict in the American history.

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

- **Governor escapes unhurt Taliban attack in Afghan town, 8 killed**

MAHMOUD RAQI, Afghanistan, Sept. 3 (Xinhua) -- Taliban attack on the motorcade of Kapisa's provincial governor claimed eight lives including four Taliban militants on Monday, but the governor escaped unhurt, spokesman for the governor said.

"A group of Taliban rebels ambushed the motorcade of Mehrabudin Safi the governor of Kapisa province at 10:00 a.m. local time in Tagab district today. The police escorting the governor returned fire killing four attackers," Qais Qadiri told Xinhua.

Four police were also killed in the firefight lasted for a while, he confirmed.

The police chief of Tagab district also confirmed the incident, saying the governor Safi is safe and sound.

Taliban militants who are active in parts of Kapisa province 65 km north of capital city Kabul have yet to comment.

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

- **Clash leaves 5 Taliban, 1 Afghan policeman dead**

LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan, Sept. 3 (Xinhua) -- Clash between police and Taliban militants in Helmand province 555 km south of capital city Kabul left five insurgents dead and a policeman injured, officials said.

"Taliban rebels raided some police checkpoint in Marja district late Sunday night and police returned fire, killing five rebels on the spot," police spokesman in the province Farid Ahmad Farhang told Xinhua.

Two militants were wounded in the gun fight that lasted for a while, he added.

Meantime, a local official in Marja district on condition of anonymity said that one police constable was killed and another wounded in the firefight with the Taliban militants Sunday night.

Taliban militants have yet to make comment.

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

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanriverdi O and Selen Tonkuş. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not*

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