



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procees of Iraq

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

Energy Security

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1. IRAQ

- **MP: detainees arrested in accordance with Article 4 terrorism will be Included in the amnesty.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, for Baydhaa / white / bloc, Kazem Al-Shammari said that "the recent amendments to the General Amnesty Law, which has been agreed upon will include those who were arrested in accordance with Article 4 of terrorism."

He told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that "the next week and after the Council weekly holiday, the law with its new amendments will be discussed," adding that " there were substantial differences between the blocs and after this amendment, it became possible to legislate this law. The disputed paragraph was to include those who were arrested accordance with Article 4 terrorism. "

Shammari continued " According to Statistics that we have heard, the number of detainees in Baghdad is up to 22, 000 , I can tell that 80% to 85% percent of those are being held in accordance with Article 4 of terrorism."

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

- **Iraqiya MP accuses executive authorities of killing by silencers.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / a member of the security and defense committee MP for the Iraqiya coalition Mudher al- Janabi accused the executive authorities of involvement in the phenomenon of killing officers and governmental officials with silenced weapons. "

Al-Janabi said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA /: "The assassinations of the officers and staff in the state are carried near the checkpoints and this is a proof that who is doing these operations carrying government identities and can pass through these checkpoints."

He added: "The growing of this phenomenon in recent days is a proof that the security agencies infiltrated and some of them are carrying out these acts."

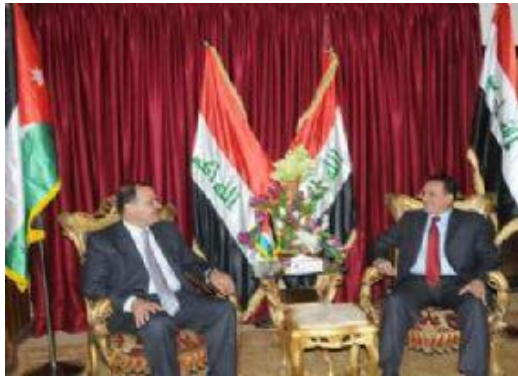
He called the government to change and exclude delinquent security leaders who are responsible for security breaches and follow-up corruption in the executive

power, which is supposed to work to protect citizens not to kill them. "

It is mentioned that the Iraqi street witnessed, in the past few days, many of the assassinations with silenced weapons to officers and government officials.

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

- **Asadi, Jordan Security Chief discuss issues of common interest**



Baghdad (NINA) – Interior Undersecretary, Adnan al-Asadi, discussed with Director of Jordan's Security, General Ahmed Hussein al-Majali, a number of security issues of common interest and means to consolidate them.

A statement issued on Tuesday, Sep. 4, by the Interior Ministry's Media Bureau, said

that Asadi welcomed General Majali and the delegation accompanying him.

For his part, General Majali affirmed the necessity to join forces between Iraq and Jordan to combat terrorism, expressing Jordan's readiness to cooperate with Iraq on all levels, especially security level.

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

- **FM expresses astonishment over statement issued by GCC on Iraq**

Baghdad (NINA) – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed astonishment over the content of the article concerning Iraq in the statement issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial meeting on the Sep. 2 doubting the that the Iraqi government responsibilities toward its people.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Sep. 4, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Iraq through its political process has gone a long way on realizing freedom, democracy, human rights, national reconciliation, law supremacy and respect to its international commitments.

The Ministry stressed that it affirms Iraq's keenness to continue its good relations with the GCC member states and the keenness of Iraqi government not to intervene in other countries' affairs; it also demands all countries to respect Iraq's sovereignty and not to intervene in its domestic affairs.

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

- **Sayadi: Education Minister's Office main side behind corruption within MoE**

Baghdad (AIN) -The member of the parliamentary Education Committee, Kadhim al-Sayadi, revealed that "The Office of the Education Minister is the main side behind the corruption spread in the Ministry."

Sayadi reported in a statement to AIN "The reason behind this spread of administrative and financial corruption within the Ministry is that all the decisions are made by the Minister's signature and all other Departments have to implement them."

"The Education Committee seeks to investigate the Minister of Education, Mohamed Tamim, through collecting data about the size of the manipulation, robberies and corruption files in his Office," he continued.

"Among the issues that are verified for purpose of investigations are the appointments, buildings, printing curriculum books, giving money to other than his Ministry, and using the public money for personal usage," Sayadi stressed.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17808:sayadi-education-ministers-office-heartland-of-corruption-within-moe&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **MP calls to exclude murderers, terrorists from General Amnesty Law**

Baghdad (AIN) –MP, Kareem Alewi, of the Iraqi National Alliance called to "Exclude those murderers and terrorists who committed crimes against Iraqis from the draft of the General Amnesty Law."

He stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "We call the government and the

parliament to avoid releasing the terrorists and the criminals under the pretext of this law."

"Those who committed simple legal violations must be involved in this law while the murderers must not be released because in the previous times when they were released, they committed the crimes again," he concluded.

Earlier, the parliament postponed voting on the general amnesty law draft due to disputes among the political blocs.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17809:mp-calls-to-exclude-murderers-terrorists-from-general-amnesty-law&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Janabi call to adopt dialogue to solve political crisis**

Baghdad (AIN) –The Head of the Iraqi Republican Assembly, Saad Asem al-Janabi, declared that the next few days will witness announcement about new political alliances.

He reported in press statement received by AIN that "The current circumstances

that face the political process and disputes among the political blocs will result in formation of new political alliances which aim to save the political process from the confessionalism which harmed the democracy in Iraq."

He demanded the political blocs "To adopt dialogue because it is the right way to solve the political crisis since the country needs the political and security stability to build the new Iraq."

Despite holding many meetings among the political blocs, the Iraqi political arena witnesses political crisis which in turn has negatively affected the security situation.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17805:janabi-call-to-adopt-dialogue-to-solve-political-crisis&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **US Congress members emphasize keeping on dialogues with Iraqi Government over regional challenges**

Baghdad (AIN) –Members of the US Congress delegation emphasized necessity of "Keeping on dialogues with the Iraqi

Government over the regional challenges."

A statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received by AIN cited "Zebari received the US Congress members and discussed with them the Iraqi stances towards the regional and political updates."

"Zebari presented the vision of the Iraqi Government concerning the Syrian escalated crisis and the humanitarian conditions in addition to the consequences of the crisis on Iraq and the Region," the statement mentioned.

"Zebari reviewed the principals of the Iraqi initiative and the Iraq efforts to find solution for the crisis to stop the blood shedding," the statement concluded.

Previously, an informed source stated to AIN "The delegation of the US Congress has arrived in Baghdad on Tuesday in unannounced visit."

"The delegation members met The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hoshyar Zebari, as they discuss the means of upgrading bilateral relations and

activating the Strategic Framework Agreement," the source mentioned.

"The delegation will conduct meetings with the senior State officials including the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, as well as other political sides to discuss the situation in Iraq and the Region," the source added.

Earlier, the US Department of State revealed an expected visit for US officials to activate the Strategic Framework Agreement concluded between the two countries.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17781:congress-members-emphasize-keeping-on-dialogues-with-iraqi-government-over-regional-challenges-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2

- **Director of internal affairs in Kirkuk killed**



Shafaq News / A security source in Kirkuk said on Wednesday that the director of internal affairs of Kirkuk police were killed by an armed group after they have attacked his car amid of the province and opened fired towards his car and his bodyguards.

The high-ranking source in Kirkuk police who asked not to be named said in an interview with "Shafaq News", that "Maj. Gen. Adnan Abdul Razzaq, the director of internal affairs was subjected to an armed attack on his car in Ihtifalat Square neighborhood in the centre of the province as he was killed immediately."

"The attack has resulted in the injury of one of his bodyguards seriously, while the security forces have cordoned off the scene and opened an investigation after the ambulances have transferred the dead man's body to the forensic medicine and the injured to a nearby hospital," the source added.

The Major General , Adnan Abdul Razzaq had been subjected to three assassination attacks during the past years in which he survived most of them, he was a senior official in the security services and

managed the internal affairs of Kirkuk for years.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3454-director-of-internal-affairs-in-kirkuk-killed.html>

- **Vice President of Kurdistan arrives to Kirkuk**



Shafaq News / An official source in Kirkuk revealed on Tuesday, that the Vice President of Kurdistan region, Kosert Rasool has visited Kirkuk city and met its governor and discussed some issues with him.

The source, who asked not to be named, told "Shafaq News", that "Rasool has visited Kirkuk governorate building and met its governor, Najim al-Dien Omar Karim with the presence of the official of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan organizations in Kirkuk, Aso Mamend".

"Rasool has discussed with the governor during the meeting, the reality of the implemented projects in the province and the plans drawn up by the administration of Kirkuk in order to improve the situation of services and develop it to service the citizens," stressing on "transferring Kirkuk to a more prosperous and sophisticated reality and support participants among its components and improve their living, service and economic reality," the source added.

Kirkuk province is of the disputed areas between Erbil and Baghdad, according to Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, which provided for the application of the normalization mechanism of the situation as it starts by passing statistics and concludes with making a referendum by its citizens to include it to join the Kurdistan or not.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/3451-vice-president-of-kurdistan-arrives-to-kirkuk-.html>

- **NA agreed on special amnesty for the Sadrists**

Shafaq News / An informed political source revealed on Tuesday that an

agreement took place within the National Alliance (NA) on a proposal of a special amnesty for Sadrist movement's detainees in return for tightening the sentences on convicts Article 4 terrorism in the law that the parliament intends to vote on it.

The source, who asked not to be named, told "Shafaq News" that "the parties affiliated to the NA agreed at its meeting yesterday on the proposal of the Sadrist movement to give a special amnesty to its detainees in the law that the parliament intends to vote on it".

"The conferees have agreed also to emphasize that the amnesty law won't include the accused detainees of terrorism in accordance with Article 4."

"The proposal has been submitted to the head of the National Alliance, Ibrahim al-Jaafari to Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki for approval," the source said.

"The Sadrist movement will form a committee to count and list the detainees who will be included with the special amnesty after obtaining Maliki's approval," the source added.

The head of the Sadrist movement , Moqtada al-Sadr said, earlier, that the main reasons that prevent from approving the amnesty law quickly is due to some political parties, noting that "he does not have a magic stick" to approve the ratification of the law .

It is likely that the next sessions of the parliament might witness debate for voting on the draft of the controversial amnesty law among the political blocs.

The parliament has postponed voting on the draft of the amnesty law until after the holiday of Eid al-Fitr because of the incompatibility of the political blocs to pass it.

It is noteworthy that the proposed general amnesty law stipulates in its first article giving and comprehensive general amnesty for all Iraqis (civilians and servicemen) inside and outside Iraq who are sentenced to death, life imprisonment, temporary imprisonment or imprisonment, whether their sentences were adversarial, in absentia and gained final decision degrees or didn't gain it.



The mentioned law is still under discussion within the Iraqi parliament as the law stipulates that convicts and detainees referred to in Article (1) and (2) of the Act are vacated after the issuance of the release decision from the formed committee under the provisions of this Act unless they are convicted or arrested for crimes they did not reconcile or pass up with the victim's family or convicted for persons or the state until paying the discharges from debt at once , in installments or after finishing their incarceration executive period.

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/news/3450-na-agreed-on-special-amnesty-for-the-sadrists-.html>

- **Islamic leader arranges for meeting between Kurdistan opposition and authority leaders**

ERBIL, Sept.4 (AKnews)- Leaders of the five major opposition and ruling parties in

Kurdistan have agreed to a call by Ali Qaradakhi, general secretary for Kurdistan Islamic Association (KIA), for meeting over "real" reform and unity among Kurds' ranks.

Qaradakhi said he has called on the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani and Kurdistan's President Massoud Barzani to meet with the opposition leaders.

Barzani and Talabani lead the two major parties in Kurdistan, Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) which are allies in the government and parliament.

For the first time in Kurdistan's history and the ruling experience of KDP and PUK, an opposition front was created after 2009 elections. The Gorran (Change) Movement headed by the former PUK leader Nawshirwan Mustafa joined forces with the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU), the Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) and Kurdistan Future Party (which has only one seat in parliament) in the opposition front.



Qaradakhi said he has also urged Gorran's General Coordinator Mustafa, KIU General Secretary Mohammed Faraj and KIU Emir Ali Bapir to meet together with Barzani and Talabani and agree on some common points.

Qaradakhi, who is also the general secretary for the International Union of Muslim Scholars, said he has urged the five leaders to give priority to Kurdistan not Baghdad or the neighboring countries or issues outside the circle of Kurdistan interests.

He continued "I thought it is necessary for me to demand a meeting among the leaders in the same way [I did] in 1997 when upon my suggestion the politburos of PUK and KDP met (over the fratricide war) and after 1997 no war happened between them."

The PUK and KDP fought fiercely against each other and each ruled a separate government in the three provinces of the Kurdistan Region. The parties untied just before the US-led invasion against Iraq in 2003.

Qaradakhi said he is now arranging for launching the meeting "because all parties have agreed to the meeting."

KIA general secretary demanded the ruling and the opposition parties to take step towards "real reform" and hoped the meeting be fruitful in this regard.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/324718/>

- **Ashti Hawrami: Oil Deals Signed by Nawshirwan Mustafa were Waste of Kurdistan's Natural Resources**

image Kurdistan Region Minister of Natural Resources, Ashti Hawrami. Photo: Rudaw.

ERBIL, Kurdistan Region -- Kurdistan's Minister of Natural Resources Ashti Hawrami sat down with Rudaw to discuss a recent statement he made about amendments to a contract that he made after he became a Minister in 2006, and that contract was originally made at the request of Nawshirwan Mustafa, now leader of the Change Movement (Gorran). He explains the degree of unprofessionalism and non-transparency he discovered in the original contract. He addresses criticisms made by Gorran about Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) oil policy and how his ministry is proceeding on a number of issues related to the high-profile oil and gas portfolio.

Hawrami also reveals a letter which he says was sent by the Change Movement (Gorran) to Hussain Shahrstani, Iraq's former minister of oil and current deputy prime minister for energy affairs.

The letter asks for information about oil smuggling in Kurdistan. In the letter, written in Arabic, Gorran asks Shahrstani

to provide detailed information on Kurdistan's oil deals, names of multinational companies currently operating in the region and the number and size of oil refineries built by Baghdad in the Kurdistan Region.

The letter goes on to say that Kurdistan's two main political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have launched a hostile campaign against Iraq's Ministry of Oil through their media.

This interview with Ashti Hawrami was conducted in Kurdish Language, and Rudaw has now translated the contents of the interview for its English readers.

Rudaw: You issued a statement on August 14 where you mentioned making changes to a contract which was approved at the request of Nawshirwan Mustafa, the current leader of Gorran, with an oil company before 2006, when Mustafa was a senior influential figure in Sulaimani Administration Did you just remove the unauthorized 5% interest reserved for 2 people or have you also improved other terms in the contract?

Ashti Hawrami: Apart from the 5%, we made many changes to the contract and to the area of the land designated for the company to search for oil. The contract, signed at Mustafa's request, was done very unprofessionally. A large area of land from Sulaimani to Garmian to Bawanur was given to just one company to search for oil.

"A large area of land from Sulaimani to Garmian to Bawanur was given to just one company to search for oil."

When I became the minister of natural resources in 2006, I revoked this contract. The way the contract was signed was very suspicious. It was not the oil company's fault, but the shortcomings were in the way the contract was forced on the Sulaimani Administration and the carelessness of Mustafa to ensure fairness when of the other party who had signed the contract.

A vast area of land in Kurdistan was given to one company. Is that loyalty to Sulaimani and its natural resources, as some Gorran leaders and Mr. Mustafa always claim? At the time, Mustafa was considered the number one decision-

maker in the Sulaimani area. Therefore, it is questionable that he allowed such a contract to be signed under his request and unquestionable authority. Fortunately, we could fix the errors of the contract and save Kurdistan millions of dollars. Instead of thanking us for this, they (Gorran) started a campaign to ruin the reputation of our oil policy.

Rudaw: Why is it bad to designate a large area of land to one company to search for oil?

Ashti Hawrami: Of course it is bad. First, let me explain the errors of the old contract and the changes we made to it. We redivided the land into four ne separate areas and gave them to five companies, instead of just the original one. Mustafa requested the signing of the contract with only a \$5 million signature bonus for the KRG, while the new contracts for the same area with the five oil companies will make a hundred times more infrastructure support income for the Kurdistan Region, estimated at around \$500 million.

The new contract gives less than a 10 percent share of the profit to the oil

companies whereas the old one gave more than 30 percent. If the KRG were to follow Mustafa's expertise and requests to be followed in signing oil contracts, the entire region would have covered only eight contracts, while we have currently signed 50 contracts with various foreign companies.

Rudaw: What is wrong with having only eight contracts?

Ashti Hawrami: It is wrong because the companies will receive more profit share and the government less. It will also decrease competition between oil companies in the region. In addition, it will reduce the bonus and support from the companies to Kurdistan's infrastructure.

If such contracts like the one Mr. Mustafa requested to be signed were to continue in the Kurdistan Region, a large part of the region's natural resources would be wasted. Gorran accuses us of wasting Kurdistan's resources without looking at the contents of contracts we have signed according to KRG's oil legislation. In reality, Mr. Mustafa was the one who was wasting the region's natural resources.

The old contract gave the oil company a profit share three times more than in new contracts the KRG signed. We were able to return the 5 percent interest that was designated to two people, an Iraqi and a Kurd, to the KRG. We returned the income to the government instead of it secretly going to those two people. The question is why was that much given to two people?

“The old contract gave the oil company a profit share three times more than in new contracts the KRG signed.”

What is more surprising was that the 5 percent interest was not mentioned in the contract; the KRG people signed it did not know about it, it was hidden from them, but we discovered it. Why wasn't it mentioned in the contract? Was there more money that disappeared during contract negotiations? That's another question. If we were to follow this pattern, instead of getting \$5 billion for Kurdistan infrastructure projects from oil contracts, we would only receive as little as \$40 million and a lot of money would have been stolen.

Rudaw: Besides the contract you mentioned, are there other contracts that

have been signed when Mustafa was an influential man in Sulaimani? If yes, what were the contents of those contracts?

Ashti Hawrami: Yes, other contracts had been signed again by his Administration at the time with small companies in Sulaimani province. Some of those contracts laundered a 20 percent share to unknown people. We discovered these and returned all the interest to the KRG as well. I don't know why Mustafa was silent about the this laundering, and if he didn't know about it why he didn't thank us when we discovered it and removed it?.

Rudaw: Gorran says that KRG's oil contracts are production sharing contracts rather than service contracts as we see with the central government. What do you say to this?

Ashti Hawrami: We sign oil contracts according to KRG's oil legislation. Article 37 demands that contracts must be sharing contracts between the KRG and oil companies. The law was passed after eighth parliamentary sessions and all the 111 lawmakers voted in favor, including

some lawmakers from Mustafa's faction at the time.

In addition, in order to sign service contracts you have to have proven oil and oil revenue already and we didn't have that. We also didn't have the funds to sign service contracts. KRG's situation is very different from that of the central government. It is like if you have two people and one of them owns a gold store full of gold and the other is looking in gold mines and if successful find it then to make a gold store. We ask people to come and look for the gold mine and tell them that when they find it they will have their some small share. Iraq has past that stage. Iraq's oil fields have already been found and can be produced at big volumes.

Rudaw: Gorran also says that the KRG has given oil refineries to the private sector, but still pays the salaries of the employees and guards. Is this true?

Ashti Hawrami: This is not true and a baseless claim. If there is such a thing we will investigate and deal with it according to the law. If anyone has any evidence about this, he should tell us.

There are a number of small oil refineries in the Kurdistan Region. Some of them are old and were built before the oil legislation was passed. Most of them were built to refine crude oil coming from the south. It is said that one of the refineries is owned by a Gorran MP. We decided to shut down these small refineries or at least to improve on the old ones. We also decided to reduce the oil tankers on the roads.

"We also decided to reduce the oil tankers on the roads."

During my visit with Mr. Mustafa, we discussed these issues. He told me that many people who work in the small refineries have families and likewise each truck may have 2/3 owners depending on for living and that if we shut them down they would lose their source of income. This was a surprise as his media has been hostile on these refineries. I also asked him if he was suspicious about the transparency of oil revenues in Kurdistan he should go by the facts, but his answer was that I appeared honest and clean in performing my duty. I asked him why he didn't say the same thing on TV so people know the truth, but he said "why would I

praise a government that I wish to overthrow?"

I told him that implementing such a policy makes him unpopular and independent people like me would not vote for him. Some of the things Gorran officials say about oil revenue they know very well are not true. But they want to continue to confuse people and make our enemies happy.

The leaders of Gorran would not dare to criticize the Iraqi government that has withheld Kurdistan's billions of dollars' worth of oil in recent years. Iraq refines 700,000 barrels of oil for local needs every day and Kurdistan's share is 135,000 barrels, but Iraq only sends 15,000 barrels.

Unfortunately, Gorran only intends to attack the KRG and the Ministry of Natural Resources. Gladly, not all opposition factions share Gorran's attitude.

Rudaw: In your statement, you also mentioned that Gorran requested from the Iraqi government to provide satellite pictures of locations where the KRG is exporting oil so that they can televise them. Do you have any evidence of this?

Ashti Hawrami: Yes. It is said that a letter from one of Gorran's officials was sent to Mr. Shahrstani, at the time he was the Oil Minister in Baghdad, in that letter they requested such information and coordination to undermine KRG's policies. The letter is more like spying on Kurdistan to derail its achievements. Such actions shouldn't be conducted by any loyal Kurd or any political parties in Kurdistan.

Gorran's hostility toward KRG's oil policy started long ago. We want the Kurdish people to realize the difference, that we will still provide them with services in spite of the central government's hostility toward KRG's oil policy.

In the letter, which Gorran wrote after a meeting with Shahrstani that further letters and exchanges to be made via email and through Haidar. In the letter, Gorran asked for Mr. Shahrstani's assistance in attacking KRG's oil policy and finding a way to rescue them from the lawsuit that was filed against them.

In the letter, both sides proudly address the reduction of Kurdistan's share from Iraq's oil. They consider my criticism of

Baghdad for the reduction unfair. Gorran doesn't care whether Baghdad deprives Kurdistan of its rights. So far, Gorran's media has not said anything about the issue.

Rudaw: The letter also claims that you have a share in a Norwegian company. It also mentions that you spent \$6 million buying a house in England after you became the minister of natural resources. What do you have to say about this?

"The companies' profit interests from oil revenue are not more than 10 percent."

Ashti Hawrami: It has become clear to everyone that the claim that says I have a share in the Norwegian company is not true and it was fabricated. Even in the letter, Gorran asks Shahrstani for proof of whether I have a share in the Norwegian company, but he didn't have any proof. The other claim about my house is also a lie, because I bought the house 10 years before I became the minister in 2006. I had a successful business in England so I bought that house then.

I challenge anyone to provide reliable evidence that I have a share in anything. In

the past, I filed a lawsuit against Hawlati newspaper that echoed the same lie about my house in England. I have not withdrawn my complaint and I will not.

When former Prime Minister Barham Salih and current Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani contacted me about coming back to Kurdistan to become the minister of natural resources, I was already running a successful business. I told them I didn't have the opportunity to serve like they and many others did to become a Peshmerga or serve Kurdistan in the past, so this was an opportunity for me with my skills to come back and serve in this way. I really came back to Kurdistan with this enthusiasm.

Rudaw: In your statement, you mentioned that until 2009, the KRG had only received \$743 million in cash out of the \$5 billion from oil contact donations. The companies themselves will spend the rest of the money on service projects. But Gorran insists that the government has received the whole \$5 billion. What can you tell us about this?

Ashti Hawrami: In 2009, we published all the information in a book in English and

then in both Kurdish and Arabic. We also explained details to parliament that the money was divided into two parts. First part was \$743 million and was to be given to the government in cash. The rest (\$4,220,000,000) would be spent by the companies to deliver certain projects in future according to the conditions of their contracts, the most important of which was uninterrupted exporting of oil.

During my visit, I explained this in detail to Mr. Mustafa. Those in Gorran who understand contracts and the economy know that what they say is not true. But they just want to deceive our people. It is insulting to the Kurdish people that Gorran's media sees them as that low and simple and lies about KRG's oil policy.

For example, \$350 million out of the \$743 million cash payment up to 2009 was spent on water and other projects in Garmian and Duhok. We gave the data on the spending to parliament. Former Prime Minister Barham Salih mentioned in parliament that the government wished to have all the companies commitments in cash so it could spend on the projects.

Rudaw: What was the rest of the \$743 million used for?

Ashti Hawrami: Some of the projects were stated before I became minister. At the time, there were two administrations, Sulaimani and Erbil, and the income was split between them.

"The oil issue is related to all of Kurdistan. Gorran is part of this community; I would like for them to constructively participate in this."

As I heard at the time, Mr. Mustafa's decisions superseded the Sulaimani Administration. It is said some of the projects money may have disappeared in Sulaimani. It is fair to ask Mr. Mustafa if some of that money was used to build his movement's media infrastructure. In general, we will collect data on how the money was spent for the projects and take it to parliament.

Rudaw: KNN television says that the KRG has signed 40 contracts and that in all of them only 20 percent revenue will go to the government. Forty percent will go to the foreign companies and the other 20 percent will go to local companies, most

of them owned by KDP and PUK officials. If this is not true, what are the figures?

Ashti Hawrami: By taking a quick look at the contracts, any person who can read will realize that these are all absolute lies. All their data is made up and wrong. The companies' profit interests from oil revenue are not more than 10 percent. No political party has a share in the oil contracts.

When the contracts were signed under their authority, a huge share was given to the companies with some secret shares for some unknown people. Gorran think it is still the same. These statistics are fictions and do not exist in the contracts that the minister of natural resources has signed.

Rudaw: When you visited Mustafa, did you explain everything to him? Gorran says they don't know anything since everything is a secret?

Ashti Hawrami: Mr. Mustafa is aware of the situation as he was a part of the oil contracts from the beginning. I explained everything to him during my visit. I am

sure he knows now that what is being mentioned in his party's media is not true.

The subject of oil is one of the biggest strategic subjects in Kurdistan. It should not become a political bargaining matter. I know Gorran knows that KRG's oil policy is successful, but it is concerned that the KDP and PUK's power will increase as the result of this success so its view and actions on oil is a political one.

The oil issue is related to all of Kurdistan. Gorran is part of this community; I would like for them to constructively participate in this. It is not acceptable to continue to behave like the enemies of the Kurds. I urge Gorran officials to use their conscience and stop confusing our people and being hostile toward KRG's oil policy.

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/interview/5152.html>

- **Locals Accuse Baghdad of Neglecting Large Oil Field in Diyala**

KHANAQIN, Kurdistan Region -- An official in Diyala province says that the Oil Ministry in Baghdad has purposely failed to follow up on the Naft Khana oil field.

The field, in eastern Iraq, is allegedly being used by Iran.

Ismael Juburi, a member of the oil and gas committee in the Diyala Provincial Committee (DPC), told Rudaw that his council has asked the Iraqi government to use Naftkhana to its full oil-producing potential, but that “despite promises, no action has been taken yet.”

He said there are 19 oil wells in Naft Khana, but only four are being used.

Juburi blamed Hussain Shahrستاني, Iraq’s deputy prime minister for energy affairs, for “neglecting” Naftkhana. Additionally, he called the oil minister “nothing but an employee of Shahrستاني.”

“Naftkhana was the first place in Iraq to produce oil and has very good quality oil, but has been neglected,” said Juburi.



Jalil Ibrahim, a Kurdish member of the DPC, criticized the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) for neglecting Naftkhana as well.

Naftkhana is near the Kurdish populated areas in the north of Diyala province. The area underwent an ethnic cleansing campaign by Saddam Hussein, with Kurdish inhabitants removed and Arabs brought in to settle in the area.

Naftkhana and the surrounding areas are now controlled by Iraqi Army units.

The field’s wells produced oil from 1925 until the 1980s when the Iraq-Iran War made it difficult for Iraq to make use of its resources. As a result, the Iraqi government moved an oil refinery from Naft Khana to another area.

An oil engineer from Naftkhana, who preferred not to be identified, said building a refinery would prevent gas that erupts from the oil wells from being “wasted.”

Samir Mohammed, the head of municipality in neighboring Khanaqin, said the presence of the Iraqi Army has

hampered the building of a refinery. Yet, he added, thousands of people would find employment if a refinery was built in the area.

Diyala province suffers from major unemployment as there has been little investment in the region that, until recently, was the scene of violent insurgency. The DPC estimates around 16,000 higher education graduates are unemployed.

Farhad Atroshi, a Kurdish member of Iraqi Parliament, said the oil well is jointly owned by Iran and Iraq and should be used on a 50-50 basis.

“But since the 1980s, the flow of Naft Khana’s oil has been stopped and the other side (Iran) is extracting its oil,” said Atroshi, adding that the Iraqi government has opted to remain silent on the issue “on purpose.”

Bayazid Hassan, a Kurdish MP in Baghdad, noted that Iraq extracts only 6,000 barrels from Naft Khana oil wells. Iran, on the other hand, extracts around 15,000 barrels a day, though most of the oil field lies inside Iraqi territory.

Asim Jihad, Iraq’s deputy oil minister, reported that his ministry has been holding meetings with Iranians and a joint committee has now been formed to work on extracting oil from Naft Khana’s fields together.

“Since 2003, Iraq has been experiencing internal security and political problems that have hampered its development and paralyzed oil projects,” Jihad said. “But now the Oil Ministry has plans to develop Iraq’s oil sector.”

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/kurds/5164.html>

2. IRAN

• **MP: Tehran's Proposal to Decrease Distance between Fatah, Hamas**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Tehran's offer to host talks among different Palestinian groups will help reduce the rift between Fatah and Hamas and facilitate their unification, a senior Iranian legislator said on Wednesday.



"Given its position among Palestinians, Iran can draw the mediation plan among the Palestinian groups to gather them and narrow the gap between Fatah and Hamas," Rapporteur of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Seyed Hossein Naqavi Hosseini said.

In the recent meeting between Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Tehran, Ahmadinejad offered to host talks among different Palestinian groups in Tehran.

"Fatah and Hamas's trust in Iran will bring Ahmadinejad's proposal into action," Naqavi Hosseini underlined, adding that Iran's all-out support for Palestine paves the way for Tehran's mediation.

Abbas, heading a high-ranking delegation, attended the 16th Non-Aligned

Movement summit held in the Iranian capital from August 26 to 31.

His visit to Tehran angered Israeli officials so deeply that the regime's foreign minister Avigdor Liberman asked for his assassination.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman in an interview with Channel 10 of Israeli television used harsh and provocative remarks against Abbas and asked for the assassination of the PA chief or his seizure in Ramallah when he returns from Iran.

Despite the fact that his call for assassinating Abbas is a blatant case of state-sponsored terrorism, the Israeli foreign minister used vulgar language to insult over 120 NAM member states calling them all "terrorists".

"The fact that Abbas attended terrorists' summit in Tehran is a black day in Israel's history," Liberman said.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061812>

- **Pakistan Announces Timeline for Iran Gas Pipeline Construction**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Pakistan underlined that gas imports from Iran through a multi-billion-dollar pipeline project which is now under construction would start in two years.

Pakistan's Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Asim Hussain announced surveys for the project are due to be completed before October 2012 and construction can start as early as December 2012. The pipeline will start supplying 750 million cubic feet of gas per day (MMCFD) starting from December 2014, he added.

He said that the project is continuing as per schedule and the work on detailed route survey and the final front end engineering design is scheduled to be completed in September 2012. Adding that pre-award procurement activities of long head items such as pipelines, and compressors have already been started.



Pakistan's Minister for State Shahnaz Sheikh said that access has been imposed on petroleum product prices to collect additional revenues for the IP project.

Demand for natural gas has outstripped supply in recent years, putting existing reserves under immense pressure.

The total consumption of natural gas in the country stands at 3480 MMCFD million cubic feet per day of which the power sector consumes 959 mmcfd, with 747 mmcdf being consumed in the domestic sector. Meanwhile 578 mmcfd of gas is consumed by the fertilizer industry, four mmcfd by the cement industry. While 107 mmcfd is consumed commercially. 327 mmcfd is consumed by CNG cylinders which are widely installed in locally manufactured vehicles in Pakistan.

The 2700-kilometer long pipeline was to supply gas for Pakistan and India which are suffering a lack of energy sources, but India has evaded talks. Last year Iran and Pakistan declared they would finalize the agreement bilaterally if India continued to be absent in the meetings.

According to the project proposal, the pipeline will begin from Iran's Assalouyeh Energy Zone in the south and stretch over 1,100 km through Iran. In Pakistan, it will pass through Baluchistan and Sindh but officials now say the route may be changed if China agrees to the project.

The gas will be supplied from the South Pars field. The initial capacity of the pipeline will be 22 billion cubic meters of natural gas per annum, which is expected to be later raised to 55 billion cubic meters. It is expected to cost \$7.4 billion.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061794>

- **Russia to Transfer Full Control of Bushehr N. Power Plant to Iran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran will get full control of its Bushehr nuke plant at the end of 2012 from the Russian contractor, a Russian project manager said Tuesday.

Igor Mezenin, local operation chief of the nuclear plant's Russian contractor, told RIA Novosti news agency that the power unit at Bushehr would be handed over to Iran "in the last week of December".

Before that, Atomstroyexport, the Russian contractor, would conduct a serial of trails, Mezenin said.

The reactor of the plant's unit reached its full capacity on August 31.

Russia's state atomic agency Rosatom said in May that it was ready to help Iran build another unit at the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Atomstroyexport, an engineering company of Rosatom, said Bushehr, the first nuclear power plant in Iran, successfully reached 90 percent of its nominal capacity in routine trials in early May.

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization chief Fereydoon Abbasi Davani said previously the country was to launch a second power unit at Bushehr next year with a capacity of 1,000 MW.



Construction of the Bushehr plant began in 1975 by several German companies. However, work halted when the United States imposed an embargo on hi-tech supplies to Iran after the 1979 revolution.

Iran signed a deal with Russia in 1995, according to which the plant was originally scheduled for completion in 1999. However, the project was repeatedly delayed by the Russian side due to the intense pressure exerted on Moscow by the United States and its western allies. Russia finally completed physical construction of the plant last summer, but the facility still needed one more year to gradually reach full power generation capacity.

On October 26, 2010, Iran started injecting fuel into the core of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in the initial phase of launching the nuclear reactor.

In 2011 Iran started using 500MW of nuclear-generated electricity, half the nominal capacity of the Bushehr power plant.

Iran held a ceremony in September to mark the preliminary launch of the Bushehr plant.

The facility operates under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061790>

- **Indian Oil Firm Resolved to Stay in Iran despite US Sanctions**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Indian Oil and Natural Gas Corp's (ONGC's) plans to develop a gas field in Iran may hit aspirations for US energy assets, chairman Sudhir Vasudeva said on Tuesday, alluding that the company may not give up partnership in Iranian energy projects for the sake of improved presence in the US.

"We are present in Iran and Sudan," said Vasudeva.

"Because of this there are restrictions. We are trying to find ways to circumvent that. For any opportunity in the USA, we will have to address the law of the land."

Western sanctions against Iran's nuclear program are aimed at stemming revenues of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member through sales of crude and bar institutions dealing with Iran's central bank from the US financial system.

Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd, a subsidiary of ONGC, is one of the key Indian oil clients of Iran.

ONGC is in talks with the Iranian government to develop the Farzad B gas field in the Farsi block.

It also has a 25% stake in the Greater Nile project in Sudan.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061788>

- **Salehi in Kabul for Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission meeting**

TEHRAN, Sept. 4 (MNA) - Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi arrived in Kabul on Tuesday to attend the fourth meeting of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission.

Salehi, the Iranian chairman of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission, and their delegation are attending the meeting, which opened on Tuesday and closes on Friday.

A delegation of 25 consultants and experts on Afghanistan affairs from various ministries and economic organizations affiliated to the joint commission is accompanying the Iranian foreign minister.

Political, security, border, consular, energy, transportation and logistics, cultural, scientific, educational, commercial, and customs issues will be on the top of the agenda of the talks between officials of the foreign ministries of the two countries.

Iran and Afghanistan are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding on trade, banking, and tourism on Wednesday.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1688971>

- **'Abu Mousa, Greater and Lesser Tunbs are inseparable part of Iran'**

TEHRAN, Sept. 4 (MNA) – Tehran has rejected the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council’s statement about the ownership of the three Iranian islands of Abu Mousa Island, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb.

The PGCC includes Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In its repeated statements the PGCC has been repeating the UAE ownership claims over the three Iranian islands.

“Abu Mousa Island, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb are inseparable part of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s land and will remain part of Iran forever,” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said on Tuesday.

Mehmanparast also dismissed claims that Iran meddles in the internal affairs of the PGCC countries, saying such claims are outdated and repetition of them won’t change anything on the ground.

He added such claims are intended to avoid answering people’s “civil demands”.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1688888>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

• Democrats reject Republican criticism of Jerusalem policy

As Democratic National Convention begins, Republicans slam Obama for approving 2012 platform that does not include language from 2008 recognizing J'lem as capital; Wexler: Obama unflinchingly committed to Israel.

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina -- Former Congressman Robert Wexler defended the Democratic Party platform as strongly standing behind Israel, in a speech to the Democratic National Convention Tuesday night.

Wexler helped draft the foreign policy section of the party platform, which was approved earlier Tuesday evening amid Republican criticism over the DNC decision to drop language declaring that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel that had been included in the 2008 version.

"The Democratic Party platform reflects the president's unflinching commitment

to Israel's security and future as a Jewish state," Wexler told the audience.

The document speaks of US President Barack Obama's "unshakable commitment to Israel's security" and described the security assistance provided by Obama to Israel. It also emphasizes that "the president has made clear that there will be no lasting peace unless Israel's security concerns are met" and that "President Obama will continue to press Arab states to reach out to Israel."

Wexler, in what is likely the first-ever convention speech devoted to Israel, also underscored Obama's security assistance to Israel, saying that "the president has proven this commitment time and again, in both word and deed."

He further pointed to Obama's pledge to keep Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, US protection of Israeli diplomatic personal under threat in Egypt and America's defense of Israel at the UN.

Wexler additionally took on Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney's charge last week that Obama had thrown Israel "under the bus."

"Perhaps Mr. Romney should listen to those who know best – Israel's leaders," Wexler responded, noting the Israeli leaders who have praised Obama's support of the Jewish state.

But Wexler's address came against a fresh round of tensions between Israel and the US over Iran policy, with Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, saying on Sunday that America doesn't want to be "complicit" in an Israeli military strike on Tehran.

In addition, questions about Obama's commitment to Israel continue to be raised in some quarters of the Jewish community. While Democratic party leaders have downplayed any loss of Jewish support over Israel policy, some critics see Wexler's high-profile speaking slot as a sign of concern in the campaign over how the president's stance on Israel is playing.

The Romney campaign on Tuesday afternoon slammed the Democratic party for embracing Obama's "painful refusal to acknowledge that Jerusalem is Israel's capital."

Matt Brooks, executive director of the Republican Jewish Coalition, also criticized the Democrats for taking out the 2008 language and “whitewashing” the reference to Jerusalem.

In response, Wexler told The Jerusalem Post ahead of his convention appearance: “This is completely absurd in terms of trying to fabricate some kind of stepping back.”

He said that right now policy isn’t focused on the peace process. Rather, “the focus is on security cooperation. The focus is Iran.”

Wexler said that while the US and Israel might have different “tactical considerations” when it comes to dealing with Tehran, there was “no daylight” between them when it came to the countries’ shared commitment to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

The platform states that “the president is committed to using all instruments of national power to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.”

“It is total cherry-picking of the language,” Wexler said of the Republican attacks. He called the document as a whole “arguably the most pro-Israel platform language that has ever been in a party platform.”

US House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer also praised the platform as demonstrating that “the Democratic party is now, has been, and will continue to be an unshakable ally, friend and supporter of Israel.”

But he also made clear that not everyone in the party agreed with the changes in the platform, and noted that whenever he and other Democratic members of Congress traveled to Israel, they have treated Jerusalem as the nation’s capital.

Hoyer told the Post that he didn’t know why the language on Jerusalem was dropped, but added, “I wouldn’t have taken it out.”

A DNC spokeswoman told the Post that “we focused the platform on President Obama’s undeniable and unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security,” and noted that “the Obama administration has followed the same policy towards

Jerusalem that previous US administrations of both parties have done since 1967.”

The DNC official added, “The status of Jerusalem is an issue that should be resolved in final status negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians – which we also said in the 2008 platform.”

Earlier in the day, a panel on the sidelines of the convention devoted to the Jewish vote cited a J Street poll that found that most American Jews support the way Obama is handling the Middle East and predicted that the issue wouldn’t turn voters away from the president.

According to the poll, 67 percent of those surveyed support the US playing a strong role in creating a two-state solution even if it meant publicly stating its disagreement with both sides.

Jim Gerstein, a pollster who works with J Street, one of the organizations hosting Tuesday’s event, also said that Israel is an issue that ranks low in the voting priority list even of Jewish voters.

He said his poll found that Israel ranked eighth out of 13 given issues in terms of voters’ concerns, with the economy and health care coming in a the top. Only 7% put Israel as one of their top two voting issues.

“This might be the loudest 7% on the planet, but it’s at the bottom of the list,” said Gerstein.

Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois congresswoman who participated in the J Street event, asked, given the poll numbers, “Why has the notion that it’s all about Israel been so strong and so persistent?”

But Brooks argued that the DNC wouldn’t have decided to feature a speech devoted entirely to Israel during its abbreviated evening program if the party wasn’t concerned about how voters view the issue. He was one of several Jewish activists to not recall a politician ever before delivering a speech devoted solely to Israel at a convention of either party.

“They say it is not important but everything they’re doing is designed to

shore up and spin the Jewish community,” Brooks contended.

Schakowsky told the Post that Wexler’s speech was necessary “to put to rest the questions that are raised” about Obama’s record on Israel.

“It is not going to be the main focus” of the Democratic gathering, she said. “Maybe it will be 7% of the convention.”

<http://www.jpost.com/USPresidentialrace/Article.aspx?id=283857>

- **'300,000 disabled will be unprotected if war starts'**

Commission for Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities says Defense Ministry has not outlined emergency guidelines.

Hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities could be left with no protection or guidelines for action if Israel finds itself in a war in the near future, the country’s commissioner for equal rights of persons with disabilities declared Tuesday.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post, Ahiya Kamara, whose role is to oversee the creation and implementation of

equality laws for people with disabilities, said that despite continuing requests for the Defense Ministry to provide clear regulations for assisting the special-needs population during times of emergency, no plan has yet been outlined.

“There is a big fear that more than 298,000 people with disabilities who have no friends or family to rely on for help will be in real danger if there is a war,” said Kamara.

“For those people there is no one to help them get their sealed rooms prepared or assist them in reaching bomb shelters or even check up on them to make sure they are okay during an emergency situation.”

According to Kamara, while steps have been taken to improve the situation for people with disabilities who live in government institutions and other group homes, guidelines to other disabled people during wartime or other emergencies have yet to be approved or even drafted by the government.

Data provided by the Commission for Equal Rights for Persons with Disabilities, which is under the jurisdiction of the

Justice Ministry, shows that there are roughly 600,000 people with physical, mental or cognitive disabilities in Israel, some 22 percent of the overall population.

Roughly one-third of those people say they live alone, with no close friend or relative to assist them in times of emergency.

“In most cases, there is no way of even knowing who these people are,” said Kamara.

“While in normal times they are self-sufficient, in times of emergencies they will need someone who they can count on to help them.”

However, while a change to the 2005 Equal Rights for People with Disabilities Law demands that each government ministry submit guidelines for emergency protocol for people with disabilities, even with war talk now in the air, Kamara claims that no comprehensive document has materialized. He said that it was the responsibility of the Defense Ministry to prepare these guidelines for approval by the Knesset.

“We have been pushing them to write these guidelines, we have even offered to help them but we are powerless to do anything legally until the Knesset has the regulations to approve,” he said.

Meretz MK Ilan Gilon, chairman of the Knesset Accessibility Committee, said “This is the reality of everyday life in Israel and, of course, in wartime it will get much worse.”

“We already saw this lack of preparedness during the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead; if there is another war people with disabilities will only be able to pray that they stay safe.”

Gilon said that he has already turned to recently appointed Home Front Command Minister Avi Dichter to request his assistance in pushing through guidelines and regulations that will ensure the relevant authorities provide help for people with disabilities if war does break out.

“I will continue to pressure him until something changes,” Gilon said Tuesday.

Yuval Wagner, director and founder of Access Israel, a nonprofit organization lobbying for greater accessibility for disabled persons, commented that the issue of accessibility to bomb shelters and sealed rooms is of great urgency today as talk of war with Iran continues.



“When the government talks about attacking or defending the population, then it really needs to keep in mind that there are 1.5 million people with disabilities or who are elderly that do not have a way to stay safe,” said Wagner.

He said that this involved more than just ensuring access to bomb shelters or sealed rooms, it also required protection for foreign workers who provide home help, as well as home delivery of food and medicine in case of a crisis.

“This is a big problem and we urge all government ministries to take care of it

now,” pointed out Wagner. “If missiles do end up flying around then they will be the first ones to die.”

In response, a Defense Ministry spokesman said the office had already finished writing the official regulations some six months ago and that it was the Knesset holding up final approval of the procedures.

“Preparing the regulations relating to emergency services for people with disabilities also involves other government offices and we hope it will be finally complete and ready for approval before December,” said the spokesman.

He emphasized that it was also the responsibility of other government offices – health, welfare and social affairs and more – to ensure the safety of people with disabilities.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=283846>

- **Analysis: What is the PM's red line on Iran?**

National security experts discuss what Netanyahu may have in mind when he calls for a red line to be drawn.

This week, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu spoke of a critical red line, a watershed moment that the international community must tell Iran that there is no turning back from, if Tehran wishes to avoid a military strike.

Just what could that red line be? National security experts provide a range of answers.

“I do not know what ‘red line’ Netanyahu has in mind, but at this point, stopping all uranium enrichment, and full transparency for International Atomic Energy Agency experts visiting all nuclear sites is necessary to convince Israel that Iran no longer pursues a nuclear military option, said Prof. Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin- Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University.

“Later on, dismantling the uranium enrichment infrastructure is necessary,” Inbar said. Furthermore, the prevention of construction of plutonium separation

facilities “could reassure Israel that Iran is not on its way to the bomb.”

Emily Landau, director of the Arms Control and Regional Security Project at the Institute for National Security Studies, noted that red lines have already been crossed by Iran.

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

“I find myself totally in agreement with Netanyahu on this point,” she said. “You need massive pressure on Iran to get it to negotiate seriously,” Landau said, adding that this was the purpose served by defining a red line.

Without a credible military threat, economic sanctions and diplomacy stood no chance, she said. While international sanctions have been tightened, “we’re not seeing a clear enough message on the credible threat,” Landau added.



General statements by US President Barack Obama have not been sufficient, Landau argued, “because it seems that the US is depending on intelligence intercepts of information showing that Iran has made a decision, that the supreme leader told the head of the nuclear program, go for it, we’re going for nuclear weapons.”

But the US could very easily miss that information, and Iran could move to the breakthrough stage in its nuclear program without giving the US enough time to use military force, she argued.

“The idea is to set a red line now, to beef up the credibility of consequences,” Landau said.

The clearest red line would be any indication that Iran has enriched uranium beyond the 20 percent level, she added. The IAEA can detect that kind of change.

“That is a clear-cut red line. It is not based on intelligence. The idea is that you get Iran to think that the US is totally serious,” Landau said.

A 20 percent red line policy stands a chance of getting Iran to enter into negotiations in a serious manner, in which the West would aim to get the Islamic Republic to stop enriching uranium, ship out its stockpile and shut down its subterranean nuclear site at Fordow.

Ephraim Kam, deputy head of the Institute for National Security Studies said he could only guess what Netanyahu meant by a red line: “A defined and final timetable for negotiations with Iran, after which other measures will be taken, including a military option.”

Most importantly, Kam said, Netanyahu is expecting the US “to make it clear, without stuttering, that the military option is real if Iran does not stop enriching uranium.”

<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=283839>

- **French judges investigating Arafat's death seek exhumation**

PARIS (Reuters) -- Three French judges are preparing to travel to Ramallah to seek the exhumation Yasser Arafat's body as part of an investigation into whether he was murdered by poison, a judicial source told Reuters on Wednesday.

The investigating magistrates will need approval from both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, but President Mahmoud Abbas has already expressed his government's willingness to exhume the body from a limestone sepulcher in Ramallah.

Arafat's widow, Suha, said in a statement sent to Reuters that the judges told her lawyer they had begun the necessary steps to travel to Ramallah, where police experts would carry out tests under their authority.

"I respectfully ask the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League to suspend all initiatives while the French justice system is looking into the case, other than to act together with them," Suha Arafat wrote.



The French murder investigation "should take precedence over all other procedures, because it is the incontestable guarantee of independence and neutrality", she added.

The court launched the murder inquiry last month into the 2004 death of Arafat in a Paris military hospital after his widow said he may have been poisoned.

No autopsy was carried out after Arafat died, aged 75, a month after being flown to France, seriously ill, from his headquarters in Ramallah.

Allegations of foul play spread quickly after French doctors said they could not establish a cause of death.

Suha Arafat's allegations of poisoning followed a Swiss institute's discovery of high levels of the radioactive element polonium-210 on Arafat's clothing.

The Institute of Radiation Physics in Lausanne said last week it was willing to help conduct a scientific investigation into whether Arafat was poisoned, but that time was of the essence in order to detect traces of the radioactive substance.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517325>

- **Head of popular committee shot dead near Jenin camp**

In May, Palestinian Authority forces launched a large scale security crackdown in the Jenin district.

JENIN (Ma'an) -- The head of a popular committee for public services was shot dead near Jenin refugee camp on Wednesday, Jenin officials said.

Hisham al-Rakh was shot several times by unidentified gunmen while driving his car in a mountainous area near the refugee camp, Jenin governor Talal Dweikat told Ma'an.



Reports indicate that al-Rakh was shot at least 7 times by the gunmen and taken to Jenin hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Dweikat strongly condemned the shooting and said that security forces were investigating the attack. It is not known why al-Rakh was targeted.

In May, Palestinian Authority forces launched a large scale security crackdown in the Jenin district after gunmen opened fire on the home of late governor Qaddura Musa, leading to a heart attack which caused his death.

A number of members of the PA security forces were questioned on suspicion of involvement in different illicit activities, and illegally possessed weapons were

confiscated, commander of Jenin's security forces Radi Asida said.

The northern West Bank city of Jenin became known as a center for Palestinian fighters during the second intifada, with many militant groups launching attacks on Israeli targets from the Jenin refugee camp.

In April 2011, Juliano Mer-Khamis, the General-Director of the Freedom Theater, was killed in Jenin. Unknown gunmen inside the city's refugee camp opened fire on his car, Jenin police said at the time.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517321>

- **Protests across West Bank**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Angry Palestinians on Tuesday took to the streets across the West Bank protesting the high cost of living and the ongoing price rise in the Palestinian market.

From Hebron in the south, to Jenin in the north, thousands of Palestinian citizens demonstrated against the rapid rise in prices of fuel and other basic products.

Protestors called on the PA to abolish the Paris Economic Agreement "which rendered Palestinian economy subordinate to Israeli economy."

In Hebron, demonstrators set fire to an effigy of prime minister Salam Fayyad. They chanted slogans demanding toppling Fayyad's government and putting an end to the skyrocketing prices "which will increase poverty rates in Palestine."

Earlier, dozens of taxis, bulldozers and public vehicles traveled from south to central Hebron to protest the rising cost of fuel. Hundreds of protesters joined the demonstration in the city center against the rising price of basic commodities.

A truck driver who joined the protest, Osamah Abu Mayyallah, told Ma'an that he could not provide his family with basic needs as his monthly salary is only 1,200 shekels.

Another truck driver, Rafiq Atawnah, said drivers would not stop their peaceful protests until prices and namely fuel prices go down.

A group of youth, “youth against high cost of living”, as well as a campaign called “raise your voice” and another campaign called “where are you taking us” asserted their protests are against the Israeli occupation. However, said some of the groups’ activists, because of the dire living conditions they had no choice but to take to the streets and protest against high cost of living, and urge the PA to abolish the Paris Economic Agreement.

Israeli forces arrested seven protestors who joined the mass rally in Hebron including a journalist. Othman Abu al-Halawah told Ma’an he and six others were detained. He identified the other detainees as Marwan al-Jamal, Jalal Gheith, Ayid Abu Romouz, and two others both named Muhammad Abu Sneinah. Israeli police, added Abu al-Halawah, accused the detainees of interrupting traffic on the bypass road known as route 60.



In Ramallah, a group of young people stopped their cars in the middle of the street protesting the high cost of living. The protestors closed the main street between Manara Square in the center of Ramallah and the Yasser Arafat Square near the PA security compound know as the Muqataa.

Some of the slogans Ramallah protestors waved were: “Fayyad! We are not egg-laying chickens”, “I can’t fuel my car, so Fayyad can take it”, “No to the government of indignity and hunger”, “until when will we continue to pay your expenses?” “We will not set ourselves ablaze for the sake of Fayyad”, “We were looking for Palestine, but now we are looking for a sack of flour.”

In Bethlehem, dozens toured the city closing several main streets to protest the high cost of living. Some were seen beating empty cooking pans.

Tariq Zuboun, an activist within a group of the organizers called “wake from your sleep!”, told Ma’an that demonstrators demand annulling the Paris Economic

Agreement “which keeps the PA subordinate to Israel.”

“These popular activities do not follow any special or suspicious agendas as some people claim, but they are rather popular nationalistic activities,” head of the consumer protection association in Bethlehem lawyer Farid al-Atrash told Ma’an.

In Jenin, Palestinians expressed interest in immigration to other countries so they can earn a living for their families, because they are unable to do so in their homeland.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517262>

- **Hamas 'cracking down on Salafi fighters'**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Hamas security forces have detained 20 Salafi fighters in the Gaza Strip in a move to prevent rocket fire into Israel, a Salafi jihadist group said Tuesday.

The Salifist Jihadist Groups in the Environs of Jerusalem said 20 fighters were detained, and that security forces

confiscated homemade projectiles and light weapons belonging to Salafi militants.

"Families of the fighters were assaulted by security forces during the arrests," the groups said in a statement, adding that several Salafi activists and leaders had been summoned by security services in Gaza.

The groups said Hamas security forces were seeking information about fighters affiliated to the Mujahidin Shura Council in the Environs of Jerusalem, which has claimed responsibility for firing cross-border rockets and a June attack on Israel from Sinai. Israeli forces have assassinated several Salafi leaders.

Army of the Nation commander Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi remains in the custody of Hamas internal security services and a senior leader in the group, Abu Suhayb Rashwan, was detained weeks ago as he left hospital, where he was recovering from injuries sustained in an Israeli strike on Rafah in July.

Salifist Jihadist Groups in the Environs of Jerusalem warned Hamas there would be

consequences for targeting their militants and said Salafi leaders "will not turn themselves in at any price."

Hamas has come under mounting pressure to crack down on Salafi fighters since 16 Egyptian officers were killed in an attack in Sinai. Egypt said Palestinian militants were involved in the operation.

Jihadi Salafi groups in Gaza have denied involvement in the attack and insisted their only fight was with Israel.

Since it took control of the enclave in 2007, Hamas has launched several crackdowns on armed Salafi groups, notably following attacks on women and Christians. In 2009, Hamas raided a mosque and killed 28 people after a Salafi imam declared an Islamic emirate in Gaza.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517216>

- **South Africa Condemns Lieberman's Statements against Abbas**

JOHANNESBURG, September 4, 2012 (Wafa) – South Africa Tuesday condemned Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman's racist statements

against President Mahmoud Abbas and his Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki, following Palestinian participation in the Non-Aligned movement summit in Tehran.

Deputy Minister of Department of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Ibrahim said, during a lecture at Wits University, that his country is worried about the recent threats by Lieberman against Abbas and al-Malki.

He said that his country supports the Palestinian people to get their lawful rights in an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital, in order to implement the two-state solution.

He highlighted the Palestinian suffering as result of the Israeli occupation, referring to the United Nations report stating that Gaza "will not be livable by 2020."

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20600>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **MUJAO 'executes' Algerian diplomat**

The slaying of a young Algerian foreign official fuelled calls for more assertive measures against Malian terrorists.

The Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) carried out its threat to execute one of the Algerian diplomats held since April in Mali.

The al-Qaeda allied group on Saturday (September 1st) claimed that it had killed defence attaché Taher Touati. The 32-year-old from Djelfa had married just a few months before his abduction from the Algerian consulate in Gao.

Algerian officials reacted with caution to the news. They said that they were still in touch with the kidnapers and were working to verify the information.

"On Saturday morning, the families of the Algerian consular officials who are being held hostage in northern Mali met the general secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who told them in particular that contact with the kidnapers had not been broken off," Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci said in a statement released by APS.

"A crisis team is in session and the ministry will not fail to inform the families concerned and the public of all new developments," Medelci added.

MUJAO previously gave Algeria until Friday to meet its ransom demands and hand over three jihadists arrested August 15th in Ghardaia, including AQIM leader Necib Tayeb (alias Abou Ishak Essoufi).

The family of the executed hostage declined to make any comment.

According to Kamel Rachdi, a professor of politics at the University of Algiers, Algeria must now do its utmost to free the other hostages.

"It must use all means of negotiation at its disposal to ensure that they are released alive and will come back safe and sound to their families," he said, adding that the Algerian authorities have stayed true to their principles in negotiating with the kidnapers.

"Now that the kidnapers have shown their intentions in a violent manner, Algeria must redouble its efforts and take the negotiations as far as it can," he said.

Mohamed Drif, an expert on Islamist groups, said in an interview with El Khabar that MUJAO had initially abducted Spanish and Italian nationals and demanded 30 million euros for their release.

"When they kidnapped the Algerian diplomats, they demanded a ransom of 15 million euros to begin with," Drif said. "This group wants to give credence to its threats, that's why it changed its demand and demanded the release of AQIM members who were arrested recently, because they know that the Algerian authorities take a tough stance on ransom payments."

He pointed out that MUJAO has adopted the same approach as al-Qaeda.

"The execution of the hostage would appear to be a move aimed at Algeria, but in reality it is aimed at the West," he said.

In a video which was released on Sunday, a MUJAO terrorist known as Nabil Abou Alkama said that Algeria neglects its citizens, unlike Western states which do not hesitate to pay to save the lives of their nationals.

The announcement was met with sadness and outrage

"It's a disgraceful and monstrous act, I can't believe they do this in the name of religion," Latifa Rezig, 36, told Magharebia.

She wondered whether Algeria would now have to take military action in Mali. "I think they're doing this to goad us into war," Rezig concluded.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/09/04/feature-01

- **EU counter-terror official visits Nouakchott**

Mauritanian officials recently met with an EU envoy to co-ordinate the fight against terrorism in the Sahel.

[AFP/Georges Gobet] EU General Pierre-Michel Joana met with Mauritanian officials to discuss joint counter-terror efforts.

Mauritanian Justice Minister Abidine Ould El Kheir held talks last Wednesday (August

29th) with Major General Pierre-Michel Joana, the European Union Special Advisor for African Peacekeeping Capabilities, during a tour of the Sahel region that began with a visit to Mali.

The Mauritanian minister, together with some of his aides, held talks with the security envoy on the mechanisms needed to counter terrorism and organised crime in the region, AMI reported.

However, not all details of issues discussed between the EU official and Mauritanian justice minister were disclosed.

"These meetings are very important because they allow regional officials to explore and discuss all aspects of the security picture in Sahel, which has become one of the hottest areas in the world," according to Sahel affairs analyst Moukhtar al-Salem.

"They will also enable Gen. Pierre-Michel Joana, counter-terrorism programme co-ordinator in the Sahel, to listen to Mauritania's declared point of view, which states that the Touaregs' legitimate demands must be listened to as long as

the ceiling of demands doesn't reach independence," the analyst added. "This is in addition to the need to preserve Mali's territorial integrity and to avoid a war that doesn't have the support and participation of the entire international community."

For his part, Jérôme Pigné, a French researcher in co-operation between European countries and field countries in combating terrorism, told Magharebia, "Gen. Pierre-Michel Joana's visit proves the importance of co-operation between the European Union and Mauritania which has proven more than once in recent years that it is active in countering terrorism. The visit also reflects the European Union's will to enhance and consolidate its relations with the South Mediterranean countries as part of counter-terrorism efforts in the region."

"The European, especially the French, partners are required to count on the efforts of countries that have shown determination and efficiency in eradicating this phenomenon which threatens the sub-region and European Union countries," the French researcher added.

"The complex and transnational nature of security, political, and socio-cultural phenomena in the region requires serious co-operation of all actors and stakeholders," Pigné concluded.

According to journalist Yacoub Ould Bahdah, Mauritania's role in combating terrorism was "characterised by extreme caution".

Mauritania "doesn't want to intervene in northern Mali and confront the armed groups that it has always hunted down deep into Malian soil, he told Magharebia. "It also seems that Mauritania, exactly like Algeria, is not completely opposed to intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in northern Mali."



The reporter added, "It even backs the option of ECOWAS' co-operation with the

National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) given that the latter is an enemy of the joint enemy, namely, al-Qaeda and other armed Islamist groups, especially as Mauritania is now providing shelter to a number of MNLA members and activists," Ould Bahdah added.

"I think that Mauritania won't oppose any act targeting the Islamist groups, especially al-Qaeda which the Mauritanian army has always fought after it targeted it in several operations," Ould Bahdah said.

Mauritania remains cautious about "any military action that may lead to the 'Afghanisation' of northern Mali and the resulting 'Pakistanisation' of Mauritania", he said.

"Hence comes the importance of co-ordination and search for political and security partners, as represented by Gen. Joana's visit to the region," Ould Bahdah added.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/09/04/feature-03

- **Algerian parties prepare for local elections**

The campaign for municipal elections is in full swing in Algeria, but some voters doubt if local representatives wield any real power.

Algeria's local elections are not until late November, but for political parties, work is already under way.

At this stage, their main task is to decide on the criteria for picking candidates to run for office as municipal and communal representatives.

Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia's party, the National Rally for Democracy (RND), held a meeting last week to set up a committee in charge of election preparations.

The RND needs "to obey the principles and basic tenets of the party in order to achieve positive results in these elections", party spokesperson Miloud Chorfi said on August 28th in the eastern town of Mila.

He stressed how important it is for the party's current elected representatives to

present what they have achieved to the electorate "in order to retain the public's full confidence" and to avoid making empty promises. Chorfi also called on elected representatives, campaigners and supporters to "mobilise and show discipline" so that "the RND will once again be a leading political force after the upcoming elections".

Meanwhile, the opposition Socialist Forces Front (FFS) party decided not to boycott the local vote because of "the importance that the public attaches to them", according to First Secretary Ali Laskri.



He explained that party would decide on the arrangements and criteria for drawing up the candidates' list.

The ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) is also on the track. The party plans "get all of its campaigners involved in the process of drawing up the lists of

candidates for the upcoming elections to communal and provincial people's assemblies", said Secretary-General Abdelaziz Belkhadem on August 25th in Relizane.

To this end, "nomination committees will be created within the districts and regional committees of the party", he added. Belkhadem vowed that the FLN would repeat the success it achieved in the May legislative elections.

The threshold for taking seats in local assemblies is set at 7%, Interior Minister Dahou Ould Kablia announced on August 4th. The minister advised smaller parties to join together and form alliances in order to have an impact, "otherwise they may disappear".

In the 2007 local elections, the RND and FLN won the majority of seats.

Voters hold different views of this year's poll. While party activists are getting heavily involved trying to raise voters' awareness of what is at stake in these elections, others are taking a more cautious stance.

"The local elections concern people's daily lives directly," said IT worker and FFS campaigner Boualem. "That's why it's important not to make a mistake when choosing candidates, who must have the desired integrity and ability to deal with the issues of unemployment, housing, hygiene and the environment."

Salah, who works as a driver for a private company, feels that "local representatives don't have the means to cater to the huge needs of the public".

"Communal representatives themselves tell the public what they receive: they have neither the funds nor the necessary prerogatives to deal with the shortage of housing, for instance, never mind the shortage of jobs. They're barely able to have household waste collected," he commented.

http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2012/09/03/feature-01

- **Administrative court says FJP dissolution out of its jurisdiction**

Freedom and Justice Party - an upshot of powerful Muslim Brotherhood -

sympathizers during party's Inaugural Convention, Awseem, Giza, June 11, 2011. MB leaders Essam al-Erian and Mohamed al-Beltagy were present.

The Administrative Court ruled Tuesday that a case demanding the dissolution of the Freedom and Justice Party, the Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, is not within its jurisdiction and referred the case to the Supreme Administrative Court.

The lawsuit demands a swift decision to dissolve the party, halt its political activities and impose guardianship of its headquarters. The party violates an article in the supplement to the Constitutional Declaration that prohibits the establishment of political parties on a religious basis, the claimants said.

The FJP won nearly a 45 percent majority in elections for the People's Assembly, which was dissolved in June following a decision by the Supreme Constitutional Court. Before quitting his post so that he could run in the presidential elections, President Mohamed Morsy was the head of the FJP.

According to the lawsuit, the party violated the fourth article in the Constitutional Declaration issued in March 2011 and the third paragraph of the fourth article of the law on political parties, which both ban establishing parties based on religion.

The lawsuit demands that the head of the FJP submit annual reports about the party's activities and financial affairs to legal authorities. The suit adds that the FJP used religious slogans in campaigning, mixing religion and politics.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/administrative-court-says-fjp-dissolution-out-its-jurisdiction>

- **Revolutionary groups sue Tantawi and Anan for killing demonstrators**

Representatives from revolutionary movements filed a complaint against former Defense Minister Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi and former military Chief of Staff Sami Anan on Tuesday, accusing them of murder and attempted murder during the clashes at Maspero, on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, and in front of the Cabinet building.

The April 6 Youth Movement Democratic Front filed a group complaint, in cooperation with other revolutionary movements, demanding a swift trial for the two senior officers.

Tantawi was head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces from 11 February 2011 when former President Hosni Mubarak stepped down until President Mohamed Morsy was sworn into office on 30 June 2012. Anan was the deputy chief of the military council during this period.



Activist Ahmed Douma, who filed a complaint on 16 August accusing the military council of murder, said complaints against the military council would be taken from all governorates and combined into one case. He also said that the April 6 movement and other activists would organize a campaign called “Retribution is a Right” to expose the military council’s

violations and demand a trial of the generals.

Douma said that the public prosecutor received the complaints and is following the required procedures to deal with them.

The transitional period presided over by the SCAF was marked by a number of bloody incidents during which protesters were killed.

In October 2011, 28 died when military forces brutally dispersed a peaceful, Coptic-led march outside the state television building, known as Maspero. Video clips circulated of protesters being mowed down by an armored vehicle, and 14 reportedly died after being run over. The military blamed an anonymous third party, which it said had stolen army weapons and tanks for the attack.

Clashes lasted for five days on Mohamed Mahmoud Street in November 2011 after security forces tried to break up a sit-in of revolutionary martyrs’ families in Tahrir Square. Forty-five people died and hundreds were injured. Shortly after in December 2011, 17 were killed after the

military violently disbanded a sit-in in front of the Cabinet building protesting Kamal al-Ganzouri's appointment as prime minister.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/revolutionary-groups-sue-tantawi-and-anan-killing-demonstrators>

- **Morsy appoints 10 new governors, including three military generals**



President Mohamed Morsy appointed 10 new governors, of whom four are affiliated with the Brotherhood, three are retired military generals and five are academics.

The appointments counter recent media reports about a Brotherhood quest to hegemonize local governance by reserving a large percentage of governors' posts for its members. Presidential spokesperson

Yasser Ali says the decisions were based on merit, not party affiliations.

Saad al-Husseiny, 59, was appointed as governor of Kafr al-Sheikh in the Delta, a traditional stronghold for the Brothers but which gave fewer votes to Morsy than expected in the presidential polls.

Husseiny was the secretary of the now-dissolved People's Assembly Budget and Planning Committee and a parliamentary spokesperson for the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party.

Monufiya, the hometown of the two last presidents and a stronghold of the former regime, was given to 67-year-old Mohamed Bashir, a member of the Brotherhood Guidance Bureau.

While new appointments are not dominated by Brotherhood members, among them are figures who sympathize with the group. Osama Kamal, Engineers Syndicate undersecretary who won the election by running on the Brotherhood ticket, was appointed governor of Cairo.

Meanwhile, the new appointments preserved the traditional practice of giving

border governorates' posts to army generals. The contentious North Sinai Governorate, bordering the Gaza Strip and Israel and home to a thriving Islamic militancy, was given to Abdel Fattah Harhour, an army general. Morsy dismissed his predecessor last month after armed assailants attacked a military checkpoint and killed 16 security officers.

The Red Sea Governorate, bordering Saudi Arabia and Jordan, is now headed by General Mohamed Kamel, while Suez, home to the critical Suez Canal, is now headed by General Samir Ajlan.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/morsy-appoints-10-new-governors-including-three-military-generals>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Hariri meets with Jumblatt, discusses cabinet and Syria crisis**

Future Movement leader MP Saad Hariri (R) meets with PSP leader MP Walid Jumblatt in Paris. (Dalati & Nohra)

Lebanon's Future Movement leader MP Saad Hariri discussed on Tuesday the latest local and regional developments

with Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt in Paris, a statement issued by Hariri's press office reported.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, An-Nahar Lebanese newspaper quoted a "well-informed" source as saying that the former prime minister and Jumblatt discussed the Syrian crisis and both agreed that the Syrian people's demands were "rightful."

Lebanon is sharply divided over the more than 17-month uprising against the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whose supporters inside the country are led by the Shiite movement Hezbollah.

The source also said that the two men addressed the issue of Lebanon's government, adding that the PSP leader feared the cabinet's possible collapse would lead to a vacuum that will negatively affect the country's security and stability.

"However, Hariri believes that the [current] cabinet was formed through extortion and that another [more] neutral government should be formed instead," the source added.

According to the daily, Hariri, whose cabinet was toppled in January 2011, was not in a dispute with Jumblatt but only had a different opinion when it came to the Lebanese government.

Also, Jumblatt told As-Safir newspaper in remarks published Wednesday that the meeting with the former premier was “an occasion to meet with a friend I have not [seen] in a long time.”

He also denied reports that his sit-down with Hariri “was to prepare a coup against the current cabinet.”

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

- **Aoun voices skepticism over Syrian border violations**

Change and Reform bloc leader MP Michel Aoun on Tuesday voiced skepticism over the violations of the Lebanese border by Syrian regime forces and called for a detailed report into the border incidents.

“There are some who are infiltrating the border and opening fire from the Lebanese territories in the direction of

Syria. On the other hand, the situation has reached the point whereby there are calls for severing the relations [with Syria] and cancelling agreements. We want a detailed investigation into what is happening at the border before we take a stance on the issue of the relations [with Syria],” Aoun said following his bloc’s weekly meeting.

The lawmaker added that the March 14 coalition, which had handed Lebanese President Michel Suleiman a memorandum regarding the Syrian-Lebanese relations, should withdraw its document until official reports on the border incidents were published.

The March 14 group on Tuesday called for the expulsion of Syria's ambassador to Beirut, accusing him of being behind kidnappings and attacks on Syrian activists in the country.

Regarding the debate surrounding the new electoral law based on proportionality, Aoun said that his bloc would be prepared to back a law based on smaller constituencies rather than middle-size ones.

“[My bloc] is prepared in parliament to back the idea of 15 constituencies instead of 13.”

Lebanon’s political circles are debating the adoption of a new electoral law based on proportional representation for the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2013.

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

The parliament received the electoral proposal from the cabinet on Monday. Speaker Nabih Berri later transferred the draft law to the relevant parliamentary committees to discuss it, the National News Agency reported.

Aoun also addressed the issue of the Lebanese nationals detained in Syrian prisons and commented on the release of Yaaqoub Chamoun who had been detained in Syria for 27 years.

“Chamoun wasn’t detained in Syria, he was convicted and his name was not

included in the list of the disappeared in Syria. He is a Syriac from Qamishli [in Syria] and he fought with the Kataeb Party [during Lebanon’s civil war] and received [military] training in Israel.”

One of the longest serving Lebanese prisoners in Syria has been released after 27 years in jail and sent back to his homeland.

The Beirut An-Nahar newspaper said last week that the relevant committees charged with the issue of Lebanese prisoners in Syria “discovered” a few days ago that the Syrian authorities had released Chamoun.

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

- **Food scarce in Aleppo's pounded rebel bastions, activist says**

Rebel-held neighborhoods of Syria's northern city Aleppo, which faced renewed army attacks with artillery and mortar fire on Tuesday, are struggling with severe food shortages, a local activist told AFP.

"The regime prevents food from reaching the liberated areas [under rebel control]. Residents are forced to smuggle products from neighborhood to neighborhood," said Barra, an activist in the opposition bastion of Sakhur in Aleppo's northeast.

"When I buy something, I have to go to several grocery stores and supermarkets before finding what I want: eggs, yogurt, rice, children's milk are almost nonexistent. Markets are almost empty," he said via Skype.

"It is difficult to find gas canisters also... it's a real siege, collective punishment," said the activist who would give only one name. "If the regime could deprive us of air, it would."

According to Barra, "garbage is everywhere and people are trying to clean what they can, but the bombing is so intense."

On Tuesday, the activist said that several districts were bombarded with artillery and mortar fire as was an area near the Aleppo airport, bordering the Nayrab district in the southwest of the city.

In the southwest rebel bastion of Salaheddin, one rebel died in clashes with government forces, while a civilian was killed by sniper fire in the southern Sukari neighborhood, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

It added that two girls were killed in shelling elsewhere in the province.

On Monday, a senior Syrian army commander in charge of the five-week military offensive on the commercial capital told AFP that government forces would recapture Aleppo from rebel forces within 10 days.

In Damascus, fighting broke out in the Yarmuk Palestinian refugee camp after midnight Monday between members of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) and rebels, the Britain-based Observatory said.

It also reported fighting between rebels and the army in the capital's southern district of Tadamun, which is adjacent to the camp.

The Syrian Revolution General Council, a network of opposition activists, said that

panicked residents were fleeing the Yarmuk camp in droves amid the fighting.

In the eastern city of Deir az-Zour, violent clashes carried on during the night and into the early morning Tuesday, as rebels battled for control of a military security headquarters.

The opposition fighters finally took control of the office, losing two of their men, while eight government troops were killed in the fighting.

Two rebels were killed in fighting elsewhere in Deir az-Zour province.

The violence followed a bloody day on Monday when 153 people—81 civilians, including 19 children and 14 women, 42 soldiers and 30 rebels—were killed nationwide, according to the Observatory.

The watchdog says more than 26,000 people have been killed in Syria since the revolt against the rule of President Bashar al-Assad began in March last year—more than two-thirds of them civilians.

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

6. SYRIA

• Syrian Turkmen Look to Turkey for Political Leverage

ANTAKYA, Turkey -- Up until last month, Syrian Turkmen living in villages close to the Turkish border had largely managed to bypass the civil war raging in other parts of Syria. But ever since a series of regime attacks against their villages prompted an exodus of terrified villagers into Yayladag in Antakya, they have taken on a more active role in the Syrian opposition.

In his friend's rented apartment, Muhammed Khaznadar, a displaced Turkmen teacher, ended a phone call with his brother in Syria who explained the precarious situation back home.

“Tonight everything’s calm over in his village. Yesterday they [regime forces] fired 9 missiles though,” adds Khaznadar with a wry smile. “You never know when and where the bombardments will fall, that’s why most people fled into Turkey.”

As he spoke, a fellow Syrian Turkmen, Sadettin Molla bustled in. There's no doubt that Molla is a busy man. His phone seldom stays silent, and as chief co-

ordinator at newly established Bairbucak Turkmen Society in Yayladag, he acts as a sort of uncle to the thousands of Turkmen refugees who live both in and out of refugee camps in the town.

"It's not easy for these people to leave their villages and belongings behind, but it's definitely better to live here [in Yayladag] than there [Syria]. We're really grateful for Turkey's support, but our biggest worry is how long this situation will last and how long we'll all be able to keep living like this," explained Molla.

While Molla may have qualms about the future, he is sure that the only future back in Syria is one without President Bashar Al-Assad's regime.

But the answer to when exactly the Syrian Turkmen became a major opposition movement is varied. Political activists at the nearby Syrian Turkmen Bloc in Yayladag stated that they and other Turkmen had participated in peaceful demonstrations from the beginning of the uprising.

Molla pointed out that last month's bombardments against Turkmen villages

were a direct government response against villagers who were helping Syrian army defectors cross the border. According to Khaznadar, the threat against their villages and forced migration was a key factor that pushed them towards the opposition.

Numbering between 500,000 and 1.5 million in Syria, some of the Turkmen populations scattered around Syria have managed to preserve their native Turkic language in the face of decades of Arabisation.

Their language and culture has placed them in a better position than their Arab counterparts when it comes to forging relations with the local Turkish community in Yayladag.

A sense of shared Ottoman history means that Syrian Turkmen associate themselves closely to their hosts and Turkey. Although they harbour warm feelings towards Turkey and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, they still retain a strong Syrian identity and hope to return to Syria as soon as the conflict is over.

Speaking on the Turkmen identity, Khaznadar said: "My people are the Turks, but my country is Syria. I'm not an Arab, I'm a Turk that's from Syria."

Despite an attachment to their Turkic identity and culture, in their struggle for a democratic Syria, the Turkmen population staunchly rejects any idea of forming an independent Turkmen state and call for a united post-Assad Syria.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's meeting in August with both Iraqi and Syrian Turkmen reveals the interest that Turkey is taking in minority Turkmen groups. The ultra-nationalist MHP has taken a particular interest in forging ties with the Syrian Turkmen.

In Iraq, Turkey helped to establish the Iraqi Turkmen Front in the 1990s and supports Turkmen rights in the oil rich, ethnically mixed Kurdish, Turkmen and Arab city of Kirkuk. As in Iraq, the Syrian Turkmen hold counterclaims to mixed Kurdish areas in Syria.

Turkmen concerns parallel those of Turkey, especially the ambitions of the Syrian Kurds and the PKK's Syrian

offshoot, the PYD, who have established control over parts of north and northwest Syria where some Turkmen live. As a result, Ankara views the Syrian Turkmen as a potentially useful ally in Syria.



According to Dr. Muhammed Sheik Molla of the Syrian Turkmen Bloc in Yayladag, the Turkmen will play an important role in post-Assad Syria. Bringing an end to Assad's regime is a top priority for Syrian Turkmen. And in recent weeks, two armed Turkmen brigades have started operating under the umbrella of the Free Syrian Army.

Syrian Turkmen place importance on the birth of a more democratic and united Syria before their own individual cultural rights, but they lament their lack of representation in the Syrian National Council.

Sheik Molla explained that they had hoped for some Turkish government leverage, yet so far, Turkey had not helped them push for a representative in SNC.

"Due to our Turkmen identity and Turkish roots, we wanted a level of support from Turkey. We're working to put our representative into the Syrian National Council, but it hasn't happened yet. At the SNC a lot of western countries and their allies pushed for their own candidates, but Turkey hasn't directly given us such support," explained Sheik Molla.

"Turkey looks at the whole of Syria with the same eyes, and it wants us to push for a representative with our own efforts and means. Turkey doesn't want to be seen as favouring Turks," continued Sheik Molla.

Sheik Molla added that for the Turkmen the door to the world runs through Turkey, and that the Turkmen could form a useful bridge for Turkey in Syria as well.

"Turkmen know Arabic and the Arab culture. At the same time, they possess Turkish culture and count themselves as Turks. Syria is a key country in the Middle

East and we'll provide the connection to it for Turkey."

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/turkey/5166.html>

- **Syria's Kurds Call on Armed Groups to Unite Under One Army**

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands – Syrian Kurds demand the formation of a united military in the Kurdish areas.

According to activists, this call is logical since the peaceful Syrian anti-regime revolt has now turned into a full-scale war against Damascus.

Armed groups first appeared in the Kurdish areas when the Democratic Union Party (PYD) formed the so-called Popular Protection Committees, which set checkpoints between cities and in Kurdish neighborhoods.

Before long a group of defected Syrian soldiers organized their own units in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in order to return to Syrian Kurdistan and fill in any security vacuum that may arise with the fall of Bashar Assad's regime.

Recently, a video footage of a number of armed Kurdish youth in Qamishlo city appeared on the Internet declaring the formation of the “Azadi” brigade.

The group said that the brutal crackdown of Assad’s forces led them to move from peaceful demonstrations to armed resistance in order to be prepared for worse scenarios that may lie ahead.

But these different armed groups are a source of concern to civilians of the area who fear tensions and chaos in the Kurdish areas. Hence the call for a united military force.

Syrian Kurdish writer Hosheng Ouse sees no justification for a united Kurdish army since the Kurdish political parties have already signed the Erbil Agreement and established the Kurdish Supreme Committee.

“A political unification but reckless use of weapons in the Kurdish areas is meaningless,” Ouse wrote.



According to Ouse, some Kurdish political parties in Syria have played a role in leading the Kurdish community to militarization “despite the rigid criticism these parties launched against the Syrian revolutionaries and clashes with the pro-Assad forces by the Free Syrian Army (FSA).”

Ouse fears that without a united umbrella under which all groups can work together, the rise of Kurdish-Kurdish tensions is a possible.

Jiyan Bedirxan, a leading member of the Kurdish Centre for Legal Studies (YASA), says that emerging Kurdish armed forces need to be subordinate to the Kurdish Supreme Committee.

He considers the formation of any armed force without coordination with the rest of Kurdish forces a danger to the entire Kurdish region in Syria.

“To form a united Kurdish army would be the best way to guarantee the security of the Kurdish areas in Syria, because total withdrawal of Assad’s forces from these areas will leave a security vacuum which has to be dealt with through a high degree of coordination and cooperation between the Kurdish armed forces in order to reassure proper protection of the Kurdish people instead of leaving the door open to other potential scenarios,” Bedirxan told Alkurdiya News.

Prominent Kurdish activist Walid Shekho believes an independent leadership is vital for the establishment of a united Kurdish army.

On top of this, Shekho stressed the importance of “opening communication channels with the FSA to reinforce the cooperation between both bodies.”

<http://www.rudaw.net/english/news/syria/5158.html>

- **Iran's Deputy Envoy to UN: Iran Ready to Mediate in Syrian Unrest**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's Deputy Ambassador to the UN Eshaq Al-e-Habib said Tehran is

ready to mediate between the Syrian government and the armed opposition to resolve the crisis in the Arab country.

In an address to the 193-member United Nations General Assembly in New York on Tuesday, Al-e-Habib expressed the country's support for the new UN-Arab League special envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi.

"We are pleased to see him take up the new position. Considering his high reputation and broad experience in addressing some issues of sensitive nature before, we are confident that he would also rigorously pursue the goal of finding a comprehensive peaceful political settlement to the Syrian crisis," Al-e-Habib said according to Press TV.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to work with him closely... to contribute to the resolution of the ongoing crisis. We support any constructive, unbiased, impartial, and peaceful Syrian-led political process and we stand ready to play our constructive role in that process," the Iranian deputy ambassador added.

He went on to say that "the broader political reconciliation as well as the national unity, integrity, and stability of Syria will be maintained" only through a Syrian-led peaceful resolution to the unrest in the country.

Al-e-Habib censured the countries which he said are maliciously seeking to topple the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad by financing and arming insurgents in the country.

Lakhdar Brahimi also briefly addressed the UN General Assembly on Tuesday.

"The death toll is staggering, the destruction is reaching catastrophic proportions and the suffering is immense," Brahimi said.

He added, "I am looking forward to my visit to Damascus in a few days time, and... to all the countries that are in a position to help the Syrian-led political process become a reality."

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said that the countries supplying arms to Syria are only increasing the misery in the country.

"This conflict has taken a particularly brutal turn. The continuing militarization of the conflict is deeply tragic and highly dangerous," Ban told the assembly on the same day.

He said there had to be a greater international effort to end the conflict in Syria and the humanitarian and refugee crisis in and around the country.

Earlier on Tuesday, Syria's ambassador to the UN said that Damascus is "open-minded and fully committed to the mission of Mr. Brahimi in his endeavors to put an end to violence and find a Syrian-led political solution to the crisis."

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said on August 1 that the country is engaged in a crucial and heroic battle that will determine the destiny of the nation.

In October, calm was eventually restored in the Arab state after President Assad started a reform initiative in the country, but Israel, the US and its Arab allies are seeking hard to bring the country into chaos through any possible means. Tel Aviv, Washington and some Arab capitals

have been staging various plots in the hope of stirring unrests in Syria once again.

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

The US daily, Washington Post, reported in May that the Syrian rebels and terrorist groups battling the President Bashar al-Assad's government have received significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, a crime paid for by the Persian Gulf Arab states and coordinated by the United States.

The newspaper, quoting opposition activists and US and foreign officials, reported that Obama administration officials emphasized the administration has expanded contacts with opposition military forces to provide the Persian Gulf nations with assessments of rebel

credibility and command-and-control infrastructure.

Opposition activists who several months ago said the rebels were running out of ammunition said in May that the flow of weapons - most bought on the black market in neighboring countries or from elements of the Syrian military in the past - has significantly increased after a decision by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Persian Gulf states to provide millions of dollars in funding each month.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061792>

- **Turkish MPs visit Syrian defectors' camp near border**

Turkish lawmakers who on Tuesday visited a refugee camp near the Syrian border dismissed claims that army defectors from the conflict-torn country were receiving military training there.

"We see that this camp is no different from other camps we have seen," Ayhan Sefer Ustun, head of the parliament's human rights commission, was quoted as saying by the Anatolia news agency.

"Eighty percent of those in the camp are women and children. Therefore, it's not possible to conduct any other operations here," said Ustun of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

"And the camp's condition is not appropriate for this," he said, pointing to claims that Syrian defectors are receiving military training at the Apaydin camp in Hatay province, four kilometers (2.5 miles) from the border.

The government gave the green light for the lawmakers to visit the camp, which had long been off-limits to journalists and opposition lawmakers.

The visit has been major news in Turkey after a group of lawmakers from the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) were recently denied permission to enter.

Only MPs from the ruling AKP and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) visited the camp Tuesday. The trip was boycotted by the CHP and the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) on the grounds that it was an officially guided visit.

The government has repeatedly said that the camp has been operating under UN rules and that it had to separate civilians from army defectors in line with relevant legislation.

On Tuesday, CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu however charged that the camp has been providing military training.

"Take a look at UN conventions, and you'll clearly see that this camp is an illegal camp. It is against international law," Kilicdaroglu was quoted as telling Anatolia.

"Military training is being provided in this camp. Those who receive armed training are crossing into Syria to join the fighting there," he claimed.

Turkey has provided shelter to more than 80,000 Syrian refugees registered in camps along the 910-kilometre (565-mile) border as well as the rebel leadership.

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

- **SANA: Revolt cost \$9 billion in damages to Syria's Homs**

The city of Homs, a hub of the anti-government revolt, has suffered an estimated \$9 billion in destruction, the governor of the Syrian province of the same name said on Tuesday.

"The damage and destruction caused by the terrorist actions of armed gangs amounts to around 600 billion Syrian pounds," or nine billion dollars, said Ahmed Munir Mohammed, quoted by the official news agency SANA.

The government uses the term "terrorist gangs" for opposition activists and armed rebels in the deadly revolt which has swept Syria since March 2011.

Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights which collates data from activists on the ground, agreed that Homs was at the epicenter of devastation in the 17-month conflict.

"Even if the bombardment has hit many zones of the country, the city which has no doubt been worst hit... is that of Homs," which has been under army siege for several months, Abdel Rahman told AFP.

Homs, known as the "capital of the revolution" and home to 1.6 million people, is the industrial heartland of Syria.

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

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• **Brother of Arrested Opposition Leader: Saudi Revolution Alive**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The brother of detained Shiite cleric and leader Sheikh Nemr al-Nemr stressed that the revolution in Saudi Arabia is alive and people will continue their revolution until the full materialization of their rights.



"I think that people's revolution in Saudi Arabia will be continued until people attain all their legal rights," Sheikh Taysir al-Nemr told FNA on Wednesday.

He added that people will continue their move in the right path and the revolution will grow larger after different social spectrums join the revolutionary movement in the country.

As regards his brother's conditions in prison, Sheikh Taysir said he has no information about the health conditions of his jailed brother.

Last month, the influential human rights group, Amnesty International, called on Saudi officials to end violence against the Shiite community and set free prominent Shiite cleric.

Sheikh Nemr was attacked, injured and arrested by Saudi security forces while driving from a farm to his house in Eastern region of Qatif on July 8.

The suppression of Shiites in Saudi Arabia was intensified after the death of Saudi Crown Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and the appointment of Salman bin Abdulaziz as the new crown prince of the country.

The increased violence and killings in the Arab country indicate that the new crown

prince is a more extremist person than his predecessor and he is attempting to massacre the Shiite residents of the Eastern parts of the country.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061806>

- **US “troubled” as Bahrain upholds activists' sentences**

The United States said Tuesday it was "deeply troubled" after a Bahrain appeals court upheld jail terms against 13 leading activists over charges of plotting to overthrow the Gulf monarchy.

The US urged Bahrain "to abide by its commitment to respect detainees' right to due process and to transparent judicial proceedings, including fair trials and access to attorneys," State Department spokesperson Patrick Ventrell said.

"It is important that verdicts are based on credible evidence and that judicial proceedings are conducted in full accordance with Bahraini law and Bahrain's international legal obligations," Ventrell said in a statement.

"We call on the government of Bahrain to investigate all reports of torture, including those made by the defendants, as it has pledged to do, and to hold accountable those found responsible."

The opposition swiftly condemned the "vindictive" rulings against the activists, seven of whom are facing life in prison, and accused the court of staging "mock trials."

The defendants – who played leading roles in month-long protests last year demanding democratic reforms – did not turn up in the appeals court, the lawyers said.

The 13 activists were being retried in a civil court after they were convicted by a special semi-military court, along with seven others who remain at large, of plotting to topple the Sunni ruling family.

Another defendant was acquitted.

"We continue to call on all parties, including the government, to contribute constructively to reconciliation, meaningful dialogue and reform that bring

about change that is responsive to the aspirations of all Bahrainis," Ventrell said.

"Bahrain needs dialogue and negotiation to build a strong national consensus about its political future, strengthen its economic standing, and make it a more prosperous country and a more stable ally of the United States."

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

- **Bahrain court upholds jail for 13 opposition figures**

A Bahrain court on Tuesday upheld jail terms against 13 leading opposition figures, including seven facing life in prison, over charges of plotting to overthrow the Gulf monarchy, lawyers said.

The defendants who played leading roles in the month-long protests last year demanding drastic democratic reforms did not turn up in the appeals court, the lawyers said.

The 13 activists were being retried in a civil court after they were convicted by a special semi-military court, along with

seven others who remain at large, of plotting to topple the Sunni ruling family.

Another defendant was acquitted.

The prosecution had dropped charges against all defendants "related to the freedom of expression" which were considered illegal by the National Safety Court that was set up to try people who took part in the uprising.

Among those sentenced is activist Abdulhadi Khawaja who ended in June a 110-day hunger strike.

Also sentenced were Hassan Musheime and Abdel Jalil al-Sankis, both leaders of the banned Shiite movement, Haq, as well as Sunni leftist Ibrahim Sharif, who heads the secular Waed group.

In June last year, the specially formed tribunal handed down lengthy jail terms against the 21 mostly Shiite activists after convicting them of plotting to overthrow the regime.

Ten months later, Bahrain's highest appeals court ordered a retrial.

Bahrain came under strong criticism from international human rights organizations over last year's crackdown on the Shiite-led protests.

An international panel commissioned by King Hamad to probe the government's clampdown found out that excessive force and torture had been used against protesters and detainees.

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

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• **Afghan Trade Official Dismisses US Call for Halt of Trade with Iran**

Fars News Agency

September 4, 2012

TEHRAN (FNA)- Deputy head of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce strongly rejected a US call for a halt of Afghan trade ties and exchanges with a number of Iranian firms, stressing that stopping trade with neighboring Iran is "totally impossible".

Last week, Washington called on Afghanistan to halt relations with 24

Iranian corporations and a number of banks.

A US Treasury delegation met officials from the Afghan central bank, private banks and other private businesses in Kabul last week, and asked Afghans to halt business with Iranian firms.

Speaking to Afghan Jomhor news agency, Vice-Chairman of Afghanistan's Chamber of Commerce Khan Jan Alkhozai rejected the US request, and stated, "The demand will not at all be met."

He said that the US sanctions rules and policies can no way serve as a basis for severing Afghanistan's ties with its neighboring state, Iran.

Alkhozai said that the US administration has not sent an official request in this regard, but at the same time cautioned that accepting the US proposal "will hit a heavy blow at Afghanistan's economy and trade."

Iran is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan which has kept its promises to help to the reconstruction of the war-hit country.

Iran has built some roads, power transmission lines, and border stations, among the other infrastructure projects which would better link the two nations.

Iran has also contributed more than \$50 million annually to Afghan anti-narcotics efforts in the last 8 years.

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

- **Iran's FM to visit Afghanistan for economic meeting: report**

TEHRAN, Sept. 4 (Xinhua) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Salehi will attend a meeting of the Iran-Afghanistan Joint Economic Commission in Kabul, Press TV reported on Tuesday.

Heading a delegation which comprises consultants and experts in Afghanistan affairs, Salehi will leave Tehran on Tuesday.

Iran and Afghanistan are expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the trade, banking and tourism sectors on Wednesday, said the report.

On Monday, a separate 30-member Iranian delegation travelled to Afghanistan to participate in the meeting, according to Press TV.

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

- **Afghan Suicide Bomber Kills At Least 25 At Funeral**

September 4, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghan officials say at least 25 people were killed and 30 others injured by an apparent suicide bombing at a funeral in eastern Afghanistan.

Ahmad Zia Abdulzai, spokesman for the governor of Nangarhar Province, confirmed the casualty figures to RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan.

Police said the attack took place at around 2:30 p.m. local time on September 4 in the remote Dur Baba district in Nangarhar Province.

Provincial Police chief Abdullah Stanekzai said the attacker targeted and injured the district governor, Hamesha Gul, by detonating explosives in a crowd gathered

for the funeral of an influential tribal leader.

Stanekzai blamed Taliban militants.

There was no immediate comment from the Taliban.

Some villages in the Nangarhar mountainous region last month declared an uprising against Taliban extremism.

Based on reporting by RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan, AFP, AP, dpa, Reuters, and pajhwok.com

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

- **7 Afghan civilians injured in blasts**

Press TV

September 4, 2012

At least seven Afghan civilians have been wounded in two bomb blasts in Afghanistan's southern province of Helmand, police say.

The incident took place early on Tuesday in Lashkar Gah, the capital of the southern province.

"Two explosive-laden tricycles went off in a quick succession near a car market in Lashkar Gah Tuesday morning, leaving the casualties," said a provincial police spokesman, Farid Ahmad Farhang.

Several vehicles have also been damaged due to the blasts, Farhang added.

He noted that the security forces cordoned off the site of the bomb explosions and took the injured to a nearby hospital.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attacks.

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

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

- **NATO Chief Says Afghan Attacks Will Not Hasten Pullout**

September 4, 2012 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen says the alliance will not leave Afghanistan ahead of its end-of-2014 pullout date because of a surge in attacks against NATO-led troops by rogue members of the Afghan security forces.

"Don't forget that for the Taliban, it is impossible to win militarily, but they try to gain some PR by undermining trust and confidence between the foreign troops and the Afghan security forces," Rasmussen told the Reuters news agency in an interview.

"So, obviously, I will not exclude the possibility that the Taliban tries to infiltrate the Afghan security forces, but once again, they will not succeed in derailing our strategy."

At least 45 NATO-led troops have been reported killed by members of the Afghan security forces this year.

Based on reporting by Reuters

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

- **Local Haqqani leader killed in E. Afghanistan**

KABUL, Sept. 4 (Xinhua) -- A local leader with the Haqqani network was killed in an airstrike in eastern Afghan province of Logar, the NATO-led coalition forces confirmed Tuesday.

"Afghan and coalition forces today confirmed the death of Haqqani leader Shabeer following a precision airstrike in Pul-e ' Alam district, Logar province, Sunday," the NATO-led coalition or International Security Assistance Force said in a statement.

A Taliban-linked group of militants, the Haqqani network mostly operates in eastern Afghan provinces and capital Kabul, and has been responsible for many high-profile attacks including suicide bombings and improvised explosive device against security forces.

Afghan and coalition officials blamed the Haqqani network for a twin suicide bombings which left up to 16 people dead and nearly 90 others injured, including two U.S. soldiers, in Sayyidabad district of eastern Wardak province on Saturday.

"Shabeer was believed to have been coordinating a high-profile attack using

vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and had spent the days prior to his death acquiring explosives, weapons and insurgents for the planned attack," the statement added.

A post-strike assessment determined no civilian property was damaged and no civilians were harmed in the province 60 km south of Kabul, the statement added.

In southern Kandahar province, a joint unit of Afghan and coalition forces arrested a suspected Taliban explosives dealer during an operation in Zharay district earlier Tuesday, the statement said.

"Prior to his arrest, the Taliban explosives dealer had acquired several components for building homemade bombs," it said.

The Taliban insurgent group, which launched in May this year a spring rebel offensive against Afghan and NATO forces, has yet to make comments.

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

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

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