



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

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06 SEPTEMBER 2012

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1. IRAQ

- **Maliki, Nijaifi agree upon settling issue of nominating MoD**

Baghdad, Sep 05 (AIN) –The Premier, Nouri al-Maliki, and the Speaker, Osama al-Nijaifi, agreed upon settling the issue of nominating the Minister of Defense."

A statement by Maliki's office received by AIN cited "Maliki received Nijaifi at his office in Baghdad on Wednesday," noting that "They exchanged the views over the internal issues and the regional situation."

"Both sides stressed the importance of the coordination between the legislative and the executive authorities to speed up the construction process," the statement added.

"They also confirmed the necessity of keeping on Iraq's policy in establishing good relations with all countries especially the neighboring countries," the statement added.

"They emphasized resorting to the constitution to settle the internal disputes and to adopt the dialogue to solve the problems as they agreed upon presenting

the candidates to assume the MoD post soon the PC to take the required stance," the statement concluded

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17861

- **Maliki's opponents to meet soon in Erbil, says source**

ERBIL, Sept.5 (AKnews)- Kurdistan Region's President Massoud Barzani, Iraqiya List Leader Ayad Allawi and Sadr Current Leader Moqtada al-Sadr will meet next week in Salahaddin resort of Erbil, Ittihad newspaper reported today.

A close source to Allawi told the United Arab Emirates newspaper that Allawi contacted Sadr to hold the meeting this week but since Sadr arrived late in Baghdad the meeting was postponed to next week.

The source said the leaders will discuss the position of the parties which oppose Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the latest political developments and the reform package offered by National Alliance (NA, which reinstated Maliki for the second successive term.)

Discussing the issue of withdrawing confidence from Maliki in the meeting is "unlikely but not impossible" said the source.

The source added Allawi, Maliki's elections' rival, intends to buttress Iraqiya's relations with the other parties and increase the political pressure on Maliki.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/324912/>

- **Khuzayi confirms necessity to adopt dialogue to settle crises**

Baghdad, Sep 05 (AIN) –The Vice-President, Khudair al-Khuzayi, confirmed "The necessity to adopt dialogue to settle all the crises."

A statement by Khuzayi's office received by AIN cited "Khuzayi received a delegation from Diyala National Alliance on Wednesday," noting that "He stressed the importance of the consolidating the national unity and protecting the democratic process."

"He called to give Diyala province more attention for what the province suffers from due to the terrorists attacks," the statement added.

"Khuzayi emphasized the significance of unifying the efforts to present the services and to settle the disputes which the province suffers from especially the security situation and the services," the statement continued.

"For its part, the delegation presented a detailed explanation over the security and the economic situation in the province," the statement pointed out.

http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=17862

- **Office of Communication Minister responds to charges of optical cable contract**

BAGHDAD, Sept. 5 (AKnews) - The information office of the resigned Communications Minister Mohammed Allawi responded to what it called "the charges and the alleged security threat" in the optical cable contract the government decided to suspend its work with.

In its response the office said: "Some MPs may be excused because of their ignorance about the issue, while the MP who was the source of that information - Ihsan al-Awadi - who belongs to the services and reconstruction committee, is supposed to be aware of the facts of the project and if he was ignorant about the issue then it is painful but if he knew the truth and spoke the opposite then this is dangerous.

"The difference in the proportion that the private companies take from the profits depends primarily on the type of project. If the company uses the optical cable established by the Ministry of Communications then surely the percentage that the company gets is much less than if the optical cable was established by the private company itself.

"The optical cables in Iraq pass through Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and submarine cables pass through the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Italy, Germany and all European countries, and through Iran to Turkey, Russia, Sweden and Germany. Is the passage of the optical cable to Turkey through the Kurdistan Region risky

while its passing to Turkey through Iran is not?

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/3/324868/>

- **Iraq press freedom threatened**

Thursday 6 September 2012

ONE year after a prominent Iraqi journalist and government critic was killed, no one has been arrested for his murder and activists and analysts say press freedoms have, if anything, worsened.

Hadi Mehdi died of a single gunshot wound to the head on Sept. 8, 2011, a day before planned nationwide rallies he was involved in organizing against poor basic services and rampant corruption.

Many blamed the authorities for Mehdi's death — a charge officials denied, pledging a special investigation.

But as the months passed no arrest has been made, and no inquiry results have been made public.

Mehdi's friends and supporters insist he has not been forgotten, with the radio

station he worked at planning a special day of programming, and journalists and activists organizing events and demonstrations in his memory this week. "Hadi would say what people wanted to say but couldn't — they didn't have his courage," said Karnas Ali, technical director at the Demozy radio station where Mehdi broadcast three 90-minute shows a week.

"His program was the kind of work that makes enemies," Ali said. "Whenever I read his comments, I would tell him he was writing a suicide note."

<http://arabnews.com/iraq-press-freedom-threatened>

- **Iraqi Writers' Union says closing social club is unconstitutional**

BAGHDAD, Sept. 5 (AKnews) - The Public Writers' Union in Iraq said the closure of its club yesterday by security forces without judicial orders is contrary to the constitution and freedom guaranteed by law, adding that the social club is not a bar.

Iraqi security forces raided a number of social clubs and pubs yesterday evening in

central Baghdad and closed them, including the Iraqi Writers' Union, Assyria and the Orient social clubs.

Head of the Writers' Union Fadel Thamer said: "The union contacted supreme bodies and we were informed that the Council of Ministers will meet to discuss the details of the case. Raiding and closing the club is unconstitutional and it is a clear violation for the legitimate rights."

Spokesman for the union Ibrahim al-Khayyat said: "A force of the federal police last night raided the Writers' Union without a warrant and gave us one hour to evacuate it."

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/1/324895/>

- **AKnews publishes Maliki's order for forming Tigris Operations Command**

ERBIL, Sept.5 (AKnews)- A statement signed by Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki contains the order to change Diyala Operations Command into Tigris Operations Command.

The formation of the new operations command which requires the entire ranks

of the Iraqi ministries of interior and defense in the disputed Diyala and Kirkuk provinces be subordinated to the new command provoked Kurdish officials.

In response to the Kurdish officials' discontent over the order which is seen as a measure against Kurds in the ethnically diverse provinces, Kurdistan Region's President Massoud Barzani stressed all the procedures will be taken to prevent the enforcement of the order.

According to the statement of which AKnews has obtained a copy, Maliki has signed the order depending on article 78 of the Iraqi permanent constitution.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/3/324872/>

- **Kurdish leader: Syrian Kurds will not fight each other**

ERBIL, Sept.5 (AKnews)- Deputy for head of the umbrella organization of Kurdish National Congress (KNC) said there is no possibility of fratricide war among the Kurdish parties in Syria.

"Those who bet that Kurds will face fratricide war in the Syria after the [fall of

Bashar al] Assad are just dreaming," said Bengi Haco.

Haco added Kurds in Syria are faced with no threats of fratricide war "at all... All the political parties and forces are united over the patriotic and national issues, especially after signing Erbil agreement."

The agreement, signed under the supervision of Kurdistan Region's President Massoud Barzani, united two major Kurdish alliances in Syria: The People's Council of Western Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Council of Syria.

KNC official said Kurds have always preferred holding dialogue to exercise of violence for settling any issue and will maintain this policy for resolving the Kurdish issue in Syria.

Haco urged the Syrian National Council (the Arabic opposition front) to admit to the ethnic rights of Kurds in the phase after the fall of Assad's regime.

He said " Kurds will not be content with a centralized authority in the current or the future Syria because they demand a decentralized government be created, the

rights of Kurds and other nations be protected and democracy be established.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/324902/>

- **Three dead in Iraq attacks (AFP)**

06 Sep 2012

Attacks on Iraqi officials and security forces killed three people and wounded four others on Wednesday, security and medical officials said.

In the northern town of Tuz Khurmatu, 175 kilometres (110 miles) north of Baghdad, two people -- a female judicial investigator and a police sergeant -- were shot dead as they left the town's court, a local police lieutenant colonel and a doctor at the nearby hospital said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Also north of the capital, an anti-Qaeda militiaman was shot dead and another was wounded in a gun attack on a checkpoint in Samarra, according to a police officer and a doctor at the city's hospital.

Three other militiamen were wounded by a bombing targeting their car in the town of Baladruz, 75 kilometres (45 miles) north of Baghdad, security and medical officials said.

The fighters were all members of the Sahwa, or Awakening movement, a collection of Sunni tribal militias that began siding with US forces against Al-Qaeda from late 2006 onwards, helping turn the tide of Iraq's violent insurgency.

Wednesday's attacks came a day after violence north of Baghdad left eight people dead -- six soldiers, a police general and a teenager whose corpse was mutilated.

Violence in Iraq is down dramatically from its peaks from 2006 to 2008, but attacks remain common -- 278 people were killed in August, according to an AFP tally based on reports from security and medical officials.

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/three-dead-iraq-attacks-155729869.html>

2. IRAN

- **Commander: Iran Fully Capable of Targeting, Destroying US Warships**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said the US navy is deeply fearful of Iran's naval power in the Persian Gulf, and added that Iran will not leave the US warships undamaged in case of a military move against the country.



"I assure you that if the US warships do a foolish action, they won't leave the area (regional waters) unhurt," Commander of the IRGC Navy Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi said in a gathering in Iran's Northeastern holy city of Mashhad on Wednesday.

He stated that the US Navy is afraid of Iran's naval power, and said the US warships have even rerouted their line of voyage in the Persian Gulf in order to keep distant from the Iranian naval forces.

Earlier in July, Chief of Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Major General Hassan Firouzabadi announced that the country has drawn a plan for closing the world oil lifeline, the Strait of Hormuz, but meantime stressed that Iranian forces will not shut the waterway before they receive the needed permission from the Supreme Leader.

"We have a plan for closing the Strait of Hormuz, but executing the plan needs the permission of the Supreme Leader," Firouzabadi told reporters on the sidelines of an annual gathering of the IRGC commanders at the time.

"The Armed Forces have their own plans for every subject, but the decision to close the Strait of Hormuz lie on the Commander-in-Chief (Ayatollah Khamenei), who also receives consultations from the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC)," he added.

The general dismissed the western states' claims that Iran is not able to block the Strait of Hormuz, and said, "They allege that we are bluffing in a bid to appease themselves."

"Of course, we don't want to block the Strait of Hormuz, but we have a plan for closing it, which is a clever and wise one," Firouzabadi said.

Iran has threatened to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the oil-rich Persian Gulf if its nuclear program is targeted by air strikes that Israel and the United States reserve as an option.

An estimated 40 percent of the world's oil supply passes through the waterway.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061850>

- **Minister: Egypt Willing to Import Iranian Oil**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Egyptian Oil Minister Osama Kamal announced his country's readiness to start crude imports from Iran despite the western sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Speaking in an interview with the state-run Al-Ahram newspaper, Kamal said Egypt "is not against importing crude from Iran and refining Iranian oil".

The minister said he believed that President Mohammad Mursi's recent visit to Iran would open doors for economic cooperation between the two countries.

Mursi visited Iran on Thursday to attend the heads-of-state summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The 16th NAM summit was held in the Iranian capital from August 26 to 31.

In relevant remarks last week, an Egyptian spokesman also said the visit by President Mursi to Iran indicates change in the country's foreign policy.

Spokesman of Egypt's Presidential Office Yasser Ali said that Mursi's visits to countries such as Iran, China and the US show change in Egypt's foreign policy.

"Egyptian foreign policy will be different from the policies under (toppled president) Hosni Mubarak," he stated, adding, "Egypt's foreign policy will be adopted based on the principles of the January 25 (2011) revolution."

Mursi's visit was the first by an Egyptian head of state to Tehran since the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9106061844>

- **Iranian oil selling at \$115 on European markets**

TEHRAN, Sept. 5 (MNA) -- European buyers purchased Iran's light crude at \$115.70 per barrel on Monday, according to the National Iranian Oil Company.

Iranian light crude was also sold at \$113.40 per barrel on Asian markets, a NIOC report said.

In July, Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi said that although the West has imposed sanctions on Iran's oil sector with the goal of toppling the Islamic establishment, the country's oil exports will never be halted because oil consuming countries need Iranian crude.

"There are many ways to easily sell oil, one of which is to take advantage of businessmen and the private sector," Qasemi added.

At the beginning of 2012, the United States and the European Union imposed new sanctions on Iran's oil and financial

sectors with the goal of preventing other countries from purchasing Iranian oil and conducting transactions with the Central Bank of Iran.

On June 9, Iran called fellow OPEC members Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates oil quota violators and accused them of depressing global crude prices by over-pumping.

"It is not right that two or three countries compensate for a country that is being sanctioned. OPEC members should not work against each other," Iran's OPEC governor, Mohammad-Ali Khatibi was quoted as saying at the time.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1690194>

- **Administration dismisses speculation about Rahim-Mashaii presidential candidacy**

TEHRAN, Sept. 5 (MNA) -- Iran's presidential office issued a statement on Wednesday vehemently dismissing the speculation that Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaii will run for president in the 2013 election.

The statement was issued following an interview with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that was broadcast live on Iranian state television on Tuesday night, in which he said his government's plans would continue beyond 2013.

"Who has said that this year is the last year of the government?" Ahmadinejad asked.

After his remarks, speculation arose that President Ahmadinejad intends to nominate his closest ally, Rahim-Mashaii, as a presidential candidate.

MP Mohammad Dehqan, who is a member of the Majlis Presiding Board, told the Mehr News Agency on Wednesday that the president gave the interview in order to begin the implementation of a "Putin-Medvedev election plan."

The second term of the Ahmadinejad administration ends in the summer of 2013.

According to the Iranian Constitution, one cannot serve as president more than two consecutive terms. However, after being

out of office for four years, it is permissible to run for president again.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1690208>

- **Iran's UN diplomat responds to Israeli representative's claims**

TEHRAN, Sept. 5 (MNA) – At a United Nations General Assembly meeting which was held on Tuesday to review the developments in Syria, Israeli Ambassador to the UN Ran Persor made charges against Iran in regard to the developments in Syria which was faced by the reaction of an Iranian diplomat.

Es'haq Ale-Habib, Iran's deputy ambassador to the UN, said that Zionist regime has once again made baseless claims against Islamic Republic of Iran.

The claims are made at a time when the international society is sick and tired of the regime due to its inhumane history, aggression and terrorist activities in the region and other parts of the world and it is considered the main source of insecurity and instability in the Middle East, he added.

Ale Habib added, “The Zionist officials have repeatedly and brazenly threatened the Islamic Republic of Iran with military actions despite international law... and the threats are being made in the 21 century not in the 19th century.”

Israel uses any opportunity to divert the world attention from its cruel actions and the claims against Iran fall within this strategy, he remarked.

“It is ridiculous that the representative of the regime speaks of democracy and human rights while the hands of the regime’s mercenaries are stained with the blood of thousands of innocent people,” the deputy ambassador explained.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1689838>

- **Iran could strike U.S. bases if Israel attacks: Nasrallah**

Iran could hit U.S. bases in the Middle East in response to any Israeli strike on its nuclear facilities even if U.S. forces played no role in the attack, Hezbollah Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah said on Monday.

“A decision has been taken to respond, and the response will be very great,” Nasrallah said in an interview with the Beirut-based Al Mayadeen television network, Reuters reported.

“The response will not be just inside the Israeli entity -- American bases in the whole region could be Iranian targets,” he said, citing information he said was from Iranian officials. “If Israel targets Iran, America bears responsibility.”

Nasrallah stated that there are divisions in Israel over whether to attack Iran. “Personally I do not expect the Israeli enemy -- at least in the coming months or foreseeable future -- (to launch) an attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran,” he added.

The fragile global economy would be weakened further by any sharp rise in crude oil prices stemming from conflict in the Persian Gulf and likely Israeli casualties in any war with Iran, he noted.

The U.S., Israel, and some of their allies accuse Tehran of pursuing military objectives in its nuclear energy program.

“(Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and (Defense Minister Ehud Barak inflate the benefit and play down the cost,” he said, referring to Barak’s estimates that Israel could suffer up to 500 fatalities in any assault launched against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

War with Iran would be more deadly, Nasrallah stated. “We don’t know what will happen in the region.”

He repeated a warning he made last month that Hezbollah could cause widespread destruction if it came into conflict with Israel again, but denied that the Islamic resistance movement would ever use chemical weapons.

“We do not have chemical weapons, and we will not use chemical weapons,” Nasrallah said. “The use of chemical weapons is forbidden -- for us that is absolute.”

Addressing Israel, Nasrallah said, “I do not need chemical weapons -- regardless of the religious or practical position.” He added, “You have factories, and you have bases, and compounds, and I have rockets.”

Israel has several “weak points” which can be targeted, including “economic, industrial, electrical, chemical and nuclear” sites, the Hezbollah leader said.

Even if Israel launched a first strike attack on Lebanon, destroying a large part of Hezbollah’s missile arsenal, the resistance group would retain the capacity to hit back with deadly force, he added.

Two weeks ago, Nasrallah said Hezbollah could kill tens of thousands of Israelis by hitting targets with what he described as precision-guided missiles.

“Hitting these targets with a small number of rockets will turn... the lives of hundreds of thousands of Zionists to real hell,” he said at the time.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1689248>

- **Iran, Azerbaijan call for expansion of bilateral relations**

The Azerbaijan Republic is our friend and brother country and great cultural, historical and religious commonalities and good neighborliness have necessitated the

expansion of all-out ties between the two countries more than ever before.”

Iran's Vice President and Head of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization Hassan Mousavi

Iran and Azerbaijan have stressed the importance of strengthening bilateral relations regarding the two countries' deep-rooted ties and commonalties.

In a meeting with Azeri President Ilham Aliyev in Baku on Wednesday, Iran's Vice President and Head of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization Hassan Mousavi said Tehran and Baku enjoy a positive prospect for relations.

“The Azerbaijan Republic is our friend and brother country and great cultural, historical and religious commonalties and good neighborliness have necessitated the expansion of all-out ties between the two countries more than ever before,” Mousavi said.

He presented Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's message to his Azeri counterpart, urging consolidation of amicable relations.



The vice president called on Tehran and Baku to make use of their great potential to improve cooperation in various political, economic and cultural fields.

The Azeri president, for his part, highlighted the significance of expanding cultural ties between Tehran and Baku.

Speaking after his meeting with Aliyev, the Iranian vice president said no obstacle can prevent the expansion of Tehran-Baku ties regarding their cultural commonalties and issues of common interest.

He expressed hope the two countries would further bolster comprehensive relations, saying President Ahmadinejad's message opened a new chapter in mutual ties.

Mousavi arrived in Baku on Wednesday at the head of a delegation to attend the two-day Silk Road international conference.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/06/260111/iran-azerbaijan-urge-enhanced-ties/>

- **Russia: No signs of military aspect in Iran nuclear program**

We, as before, see no signs that there is a military dimension to Iran's nuclear program. No signs."



Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has strongly defended the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities, saying there is no evidence that Tehran's atomic program has a military aspect.

"We, as before, see no signs that there is a military dimension to Iran's nuclear

program. No signs," Interfax news agency quoted Ryabkov as saying on Thursday.

"We see something different - that there is nuclear material ... in Iran that is under the control of inspectors, specialists of the International Atomic Energy Agency. This nuclear material is not being shifted to military needs, this is officially confirmed by the IAEA," he added.

Ryabkov also warned against an attack on Iran over its nuclear program, saying the repercussions of a military action will be disastrous both for the region and the world.

"We warn those who are no strangers to military solutions ... that this would be harmful, literally disastrous for regional stability and would set off deep shocks in the security and economic spheres that would reverberate far beyond the boundaries of the Middle East region," he said.

The United States, Israel and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program with the Israeli regime repeatedly threatening Tehran

with a military strike to pressure it to halt its nuclear energy work.

Iran rejects the allegations, arguing that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it is entitled to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/09/06/260102/russia-strongly-backs-iran-nuclear-work/>

- **Ahmadinejad preparing for final visit to UN General Assembly**



TEHRAN – Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is preparing to make his final visit to the United Nations Headquarters in New York as president of Iran, where he is scheduled to speak at the 67th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mojtaba Hashemi-Samareh, the senior advisor of President Ahmadinejad, said on Wednesday, “As this is the last appearance for Mr. Ahmadinejad at the United Nations, he will present a summary of his visits and speeches over the past eight years.”

As the current chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Ahmadinejad will also submit a report on the 16th NAM Summit, which was held in Tehran in August.

This will be the eighth consecutive year that Ahmadinejad has attended the annual UN General Assembly session. The 67th regular session opens at the UN Headquarters in New York on September 18.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/101262-ahmadinejad-preparing-for-final-visit-to-un-general-assembly>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Medics: New airstrike kills 3 in Gaza**

Hamas policeman look at the body of a gunman at a hospital in central Gaza Strip Sept. 5, 2012. An Israeli airstrike on the killed

three gunmen as they tried to launch short-range rockets on

Wednesday, the military said. (Reuters/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa)

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- An Israeli airstrike on the northern Gaza Strip killed three Palestinians and injured three others, in the second deadly attack in 24 hours, medics said.



Witnesses told Ma'an that an Israeli warplane fired flachette ammunition near the agricultural college east of Beit Hanoun, killing three people and wounding three others.

Villagers who knew the men killed in Thursday's attack said they belonged to a small Islamist militant group known as

Homat al-Aqsa. Their bodies were taken to a local hospital.

Israeli military vehicles stationed in the area prevented ambulances from approaching the scene.

In a statement, the Israeli military said that "IDF soldiers targeted a terrorist squad that was planting an explosive device near the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip."

The statement added: "A hit was confirmed."

Hours earlier, an airstrike killed three gunmen as they tried to launch short-range rockets on Wednesday, the Israeli military said.

Medical officials and witnesses confirmed that three militants had been killed in the attack near Bureij, in central Gaza. They did not immediately give the dead men's factional affiliation but said they did not belong to Hamas.

"The Hamas terror organization is solely responsible for any terrorist activity

emanating from the Gaza Strip," the Israeli military said in an initial statement.

The statement said the men targeted from the air had previously fired rockets across the border and were preparing to do so again.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's armed wing claimed responsibility for launching an attack from eastern Gaza, saying it was in response to Israel's escalation.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517698>

- **President says Palestinian Spring has begun**

Protesters stand near burning tires during a protest against the high cost of living in Nablus on Sept. 5. (Reuters/Abed Omar Qusini)

CAIRO (Ma'an) -- President Mahmoud Abbas said Wednesday that the "Palestinian Spring" had begun, as Palestinians took to the streets across the West Bank in protest over rising prices.

"The Palestinian spring has begun, and we are in line with what the people say and what they want," Abbas said, addressing a meeting of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo.

The president said the protesters' demands to reduce costs of basic goods and for regular payment of salaries were "right and fair."

"Hunger is disloyal," Abbas said, quoting a Palestinian proverb reflecting that hungry people thought only of their need for food. "We are trying to do what we can do to reduce prices."

'Enough is enough'

Hundreds of protesters marched on Nablus' city center on Wednesday calling for the resignation of Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, as young men torched tires in the street.

They demanded a reduction in prices of basic commodities along with "real" support to help Palestinians "stay firmly rooted in their lands."

Security services did not intervene in the demonstration, but firefighters extinguished a blaze caused by burning tires which caused the temporary closure of the road to the National Hospital.

"We are here to say to the government enough is enough ... We want a government which lives just as its people live eating what the people eat," Khalid, a protester, told Ma'an.

Meanwhile, at a protest in Ramallah's central square a man tried to set himself and his daughter on fire. Bystanders managed to stop him and he was detained by police.

Hasan Qahwaji, in his 30s and originally from Gaza, tried to set fire to himself because he couldn't afford to pay for his daughter's cancer treatment, locals said. Abbas' office insisted Qahwaji had received significant financial support from the office's humanitarian department and several other sources.

The incident occurred a day after Khaled Abu Rabee, 42, doused himself in gasoline in Hebron. A security guard at the municipality building prevented him from

setting the petrol alight. Abu Rabee, from al-Fawwar refugee camp, was struggling to make enough money to support two wives and feed his children.

Thousands demonstrated from Hebron to Jenin on Tuesday, calling on the Palestinian Authority to abolish the Paris Protocol with Israel, which they said rendered the Palestinian economy subordinate to Israel.

In Hebron, demonstrators set fire to an effigy of Fayyad. They chanted slogans calling to topple Fayyad's government and put an end to the skyrocketing prices.

In Ramallah, protesters shouted: "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" and "We were looking for Palestine, but now we are looking for a sack of flour."

Unions join protests

The federation of public transportation suspended services for 30 minutes across

West Bank districts on Wednesday in protest over spiraling fuel prices as school children demonstrated near Bethlehem urging the PA and Fayyad to find a solution to rising prices.



The union of Palestinian universities warned Wednesday that all universities would join protests against high prices and deteriorating economic conditions next week.

The general secretariat of the union of Palestinian teachers also announced strike action. It said classes would be suspended Thursday after the fourth lesson, and staff at the Ministry of Education's offices will go on strike at 1 p.m.

Fayyad said Wednesday that the Palestinian Authority had exerted and would continue to exert huge efforts to improve living conditions, and to cope

with all difficulties as they emerged despite the serious financial crisis.

The Minister of National Economy Jawad Naji added that the PA would implement a series of measures to ease citizens' suffering and to contain the economic crisis. He said the fiscal crisis in Palestine stemmed from the global economic downturn.

After a day of protests on Tuesday, the Palestinian Authority cabinet asked a special economic committee to study a government memo prepared by the Ministry of National Economy about the rising cost of living in the occupied territories.

The committee was instructed to recommend measures to cope with the economic situation within two days.

<http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517618>

- **Abbas says has backing for new UN upgrade push**

President Mahmoud Abbas attends a PLO executive committee meeting in Ramallah on Sept. 4. (Reuters/Mohamad Torokman)

CAIRO (Reuters) -- The PLO will seek to upgrade its status at the United Nations this month bolstered by the support of Arab countries, Islamic states and the 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, President Mahmoud Abbas said on Wednesday.

Previous Palestinian attempts to improve their formal status at the global body -- a UN observer "entity" with no voting rights -- have failed. The Palestinian Authority foreign minister had earlier said they would ask to be made a non-member observer state at the UN General Assembly later this month.

"I am going this month to the UN General Assembly in light of the latest decision in Doha, the Islamic summit and the Non-Aligned Movement summit," Abbas told reporters at the Arab League.

He was referring to meetings in recent weeks of Arab ministers in Qatar, Islamic states in Saudi Arabia and the Non-Aligned Movement in Iran.

A Palestinian diplomat told Reuters that Abbas was referring to securing

recognition as a non-member observer state, a first stage towards recognition of a Palestinian state.

A simple majority vote in the 193-member General Assembly would be enough to bestow non-member observer status, bypassing the Security Council -- where the United States, Israel's ally, has a veto.

A similar statehood upgrade drive last year proved short-lived amid financial sanctions and diplomatic counter-lobbying by Israel and the United States.

"The importance of going to the General Assembly is to protect our lands by the international law," Abbas said.

Palestinians say Israeli settlement-building on occupied West Bank land has stymied prospects for a bilateral statehood deal. Disagreement over the issue led to talks stalling in 2010.

Israel has accused Abbas' government of trying to avoid negotiations which would entail territorial compromise and has asked it to reassert control over Gaza, which it lost in 2007 to Hamas.

Under its new Islamist President Mohamed Mursi, Egypt said it backed any statehood initiative by the Palestinians.

"Egypt continues to support any move decided by the Palestinian leadership to obtain full membership in the United Nations," Mursi told the Arab League in an opening address to ministers before Abbas arrived.

Mursi also called for reconciliation between Palestinian factions which are split between the Fatah movement of Abbas in Ramallah and Hamas, which controls Gaza.

Israel has annexed East Jerusalem as its capital -- a move not recognized abroad -- and says it would annex swathes of West Bank settlements under any eventual peace deal. It unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517620>

- **Habayit Hayehudi predicts 30,000 new members**

Election committee chairman Rabbi Tropper says 12,000 people have already joined party online.

Hershkowitz and Bennet at Habayit Hayehudi debate Photo: Yehoshua Sigala
Habayit Hayehudi will end up with more than 30,000 members after its registration drive that ends on Sunday night, the party's election committee chairman, Rabbi Daniel Tropper, said in an interview at his Jerusalem office on Wednesday.



Tropper has been legally barred from revealing how many people have already submitted paper forms to join the party, but he said 12,000 people have joined the party online. He expressed confidence that the 28,000 paid members required to break even in covering the cost of the drive will be easily achieved, with the bulk of the membership forms to be submitted on the drive's final days.

“The boxes are starting to come in,” Tropper said. “On Sunday I predict a tremendous load. I think the drive is very honest as a whole, but we’ll always have a certain percentage of foilshtik [monkey business].

Sunday at midnight, the registration ends and the primary begins.”

Tropper claims credit for the decision to initiate the first ever primary and membership drive in a religious-Zionist party, which in the past all chose their leadership and Knesset candidates list in central committees and smaller internal party forums. To minimize corruption, he recommended prohibiting paying membership fees in cash.

The membership drive and the primary have been credited with reinvigorating the party, which fell from 12 seats at its peak (in 1959-65, 1969-74 and 1977-81 when it was called the National Religious Party) to only three in the 2009 election.

It persuaded well-know religious-Zionist figures to run for Knesset, which they could not have done when the list was decided behind closed doors.

“The primary succeeded in igniting the young people,” he said. “Reserving slots on the list for a young person and a woman also created a tremendous stir. What was supposed to be technical ended up in the reawakening of the religious Zionist world. Young people had lost interest in the NRP and went in all kinds of directions and now I think we could get 10 seats.”

Tropper knows that after the November 6 three-way leadership race, he will face another task: keeping the two candidates who lost the contest – and the thousands of members they registered – in the party.

“I want it to be like US elections, where the loser supports the leader,” the New York native said. “I will do my best to create the best possible list to attract voters. For that, we need unity and diversity, and I think we will have that.”

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283996>

- **Rivlin: Obama doesn't understand the Mideast**

Knesset speaker says Democrats' removal of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a bigger problem than Iran.

US President Barack Obama's administration does not understand the realities of the Middle East, Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin said on Wednesday.

"The fact that the Democrats removed a united Jerusalem as Israel's capital from their platform is more worrying than the argument over Iran," Rivlin told The Jerusalem Post.

"The change may have farreaching consequences," he said.

According to Rivlin, anyone who thinks that dividing Jerusalem will bring peace is mistaken, and does not understand the Middle East.

"A united Jerusalem will help bring peace and stability," he said.

The Knesset speaker added that "rumors of a rift between Israel and the US are wrong," and that the two countries have a "sharp, unambiguous understanding" on

Iran, whose nuclear ambitions threaten not only Israel, but the whole free world.



Later Wednesday, Rivlin discussed the Iranian threat with Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi, saying that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu is not acting to provoke the United States, but is moved by analyzing the many times in history when people called to destroy Israel and the Jewish people.

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat dismissed the political argument altogether.

"The fact that Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel is not a subject for debate, and its status is not affected by foreign political platforms or elections," he said.

MK Uri Ariel (National Union), chairman of the Knesset Caucus for Jerusalem, said

that “finally, Obama’s true face is revealed.”

According to Ariel, Obama previously acted against Jerusalem via surrogates and messengers, but now his actions show his intentions.

“We must not worry. With or without Obama, Jerusalem will stay united under Israeli sovereignty forever,” the National Union MK added.

The Prime Minister’s Office refrained from commenting on the Democratic Party platform, with one official saying they clearly did not want to be perceived as interfering in the US elections

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=283920>

- **Hamas training diplomats, challenging PLO monopoly abroad**

Hamas deputy foreign minister Ghazi Hamad says the party is developing the diplomatic skills of its staff. (MaanImages/File)

GAZA CITY (Reuters) -- Hamas has begun a training program for diplomats in the Gaza

Strip where it rules, a senior official of the Islamist group said, raising the specter of divisions in the Palestinian national movement spreading to its representation abroad.

Hamas seized Gaza in a 2007 civil war with the Western-backed Fatah party that long dominated Palestinian politics and now rules parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. But Hamas has hitherto not challenged the PLO, dominated by Fatah and recognized by the United Nations as the Palestinians' sole representative abroad for almost 40 years.

It may be time to end that diplomatic monopoly, Hamas deputy foreign minister Ghazi Hamad suggested Wednesday.

"We have relations with some countries and we need to prepare our cadres and develop the diplomatic skills of staff to deal with those countries on joint projects," he told Reuters.

"The aim of such a step and training is to develop relations with world countries when time and conditions permit," said Hamad. He declined to say how many

diplomats-in-waiting would be trained, what tasks they would perform or where.

Hamas officials seemed keen to play down the scheme to matriculate envoys from its mostly makeshift and short-staffed foreign ministry. They said they hoped a deal with Fatah could remove any need to deploy Hamas diplomats, but planned to have a corps of envoys ready should reconciliation prove impossible.

The PLO, with roots as a paramilitary organization and umbrella body for the many, often feuding Palestinian factions, finally won recognition from Israel in the landmark Oslo interim peace deal of 1993. But Hamas is not part of the PLO.

The United States and the European Union have classified Hamas as a terrorist organization over its refusal to renounce violence, recognize Israel and accept existing interim Israeli-Palestinian peace deals co-authored by the PLO.

Hamas already has delegations in Yemen, Lebanon and Iran. Now Hamas' foes in the West Bank fear it aims to expand its profile after its prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, met Egypt's newly elected

Islamist president, Mohamed Mursi, this summer.

"We believe that our Egyptian brothers and the rest of the Arab world are aware of Israeli plans seeking to deepen Palestinian divisions, and to suggest that there are two legitimate powers, one in Gaza and the other in Ramallah," President Mahmoud Abbas told Wafa news agency.

Ramallah is the seat of the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority government.

Abbas, who condemned the 2007 split as a "coup" and power grab by Hamas, has said that continued Israeli occupation could be effectively confronted -- and the Palestinians' statehood goal advanced -- if the two biggest Palestinian factions reconcile, a goal that has long eluded Qatari and Egyptian mediators.

Hamas has rejoiced in the rise to power of Islamist parties following Arab popular uprisings last year, hoping to parlay them into increased international recognition.

Iran, an important supporter of Hamas, invited Haniyeh to a summit of non-

aligned nations held earlier this month. But Haniyeh declined in the face of sharp accusations by Fatah leaders that such a trip would worsen the internal discord that has damaged Palestinians' diplomatic quest for statehood.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=517597>

- **France Condemns Arson of Monastery in Jerusalem**

PARIS, September 5, 2012 (Wafa) – Spokesman of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement Wednesday, said France condemned Jewish settlers setting fire to a monastery in Latrun, an area west of Jerusalem, describing it as an act of vandalism directed at a place of worship and peace.

It expressed its wholehearted solidarity with the community of monks, “The Cistercian Abbey of Latrun is a religious community protected by France under the so-called Chauvel-Fischer agreements concluded with the State of Israel,” said the statement.

France called on the Israeli authorities to shed full light on these serious acts and to bring those responsible to justice.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20611>

- **EU Missions Condemn Continuous Settlers Attacks against Palestinians**

JERUSALEM, September 5, 2012 (Wafa) - The European Union missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah, in a statement Wednesday, reiterated the EU's condemnation of continuous settlers' violence and deliberate provocations against Palestinian civilians.

EU missions are particularly concerned about the increasing number and the severity of recent incidents against Palestinian civilians by extremist settlers in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, said the statement.

They welcomed that members of the Israeli government have condemned recent acts of violence by settlers and have pledged compensation for the victims. They also welcomed that legal proceedings have been initiated, including arrests of suspects.

EU Missions also expect comprehensive measures by the Government of Israel to prevent settler violence and to protect Palestinian civilians, it said.

They called on the government of Israel to bring the perpetrators to justice and to comply with its obligations under international law.

EU recalls its position that settlement activity is illegal under international law and threatens to make a two-state solution impossible. Together with settler violence, it undermines the Middle East Peace Process, it added.

The international community has repeatedly called upon both parties to refrain from any provocative action, concluded the statement.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20610>

- **Abbas Meets Jordan King Abdullah II in Amman**

AMMAN, September 5, 2012 (Wafa) – President Mahmoud Abbas Wednesday met with Jordan’s King Abdullah II and

discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and the latest developments in the region.

Abbas put Abdullah in the picture regarding daily Israeli violations and assaults against Palestinian people.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=20616>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

After army shake-up, Morsy turns to police reform

Protesters remove slogan of Interior Ministry, Cairo, September 9,2011. Ultras Ahly protesters gather at Interior Ministry, participating in Friday of correcting the path.

When a score of men wielding knives and petrol bombs stormed a glitzy five-star hotel in Cairo in broad daylight, the police failed to show up for hours.

"I thought a war had broken out," said Ahmed Mohamed, 70, who was driving past the Fairmont hotel during the 2 August robbery, which ended with a bystander dead and others wounded. He

saw smoke billowing out and heard gun shots from inside.

"Where is our new president?" Mohamed asked. "Why doesn't he bring the police back and put an end to the chaos and horror as he promised?"

The priority for many Egyptians, and one of those listed by President Mohamed Morsy for his first 100 days in office, is ending a crime wave that started in the power vacuum after Egyptian leader Hosni Mubarak was ousted last year.

But it will be a huge task to rebuild public trust in the police and state security services, which Mubarak used to persecute dissenters, including Morsy's own Muslim Brotherhood, as well as to change the culture of the 450,000-strong force.

Morsy has shown he can make tough decisions. On 12 August, he dismissed Egypt's two top army generals and rescinded powers of the interim military council that took charge when Mubarak fell.

Rights groups say police reforms must reach right down to the poorly paid recruits on the street taking bribes. Corruption needs to be scrubbed out and routine rights abuses, such as torture in investigations, need to be stopped, they say.

Old habits

The fortress-like Interior Ministry in Cairo, surrounded by watch towers, once symbolized the power, privilege and secrecy of the police.

Cash poured into the force, which crushed a rebellion by Islamic militants in the 1990s. Egyptians learned just how sophisticated the police had become when wiretaps of often very ordinary private conversations came to light after the revolt.

The ministry's spending outstripped that of education and health combined. It still does in the 2012/2013 budget, with an allocation of LE17 billion (US\$2.8 billion).

Changing the force's mindset on who should be seen as a danger to the state will be one obstacle to reform — Morsy's

Muslim Brotherhood, banned during Mubarak's three decades in power, was long identified as Public Enemy Number One.

"The Interior Ministry was a very significant part of the old regime," said Khalil al-Anani, an Egyptian analyst and scholar of Middle East politics at England's Durham University. "It was its main tool to oppress opposition and any attempt to change its nature will be faced by resistance."

Police antipathy to the new leadership is barely disguised.

One officer summed up the feelings of many policemen when he told an Egyptian journalist while on duty during Morsy's swearing-in ceremony: "He is your president, not ours."

"How can a man we had arrested not very long ago suddenly become a president over us?" said another, referring to Morsy's jail stint during Mubarak's rule. He asked not to be named.

An Interior Ministry official, who also refused to be named, dismissed the idea

that the president would shake up the force.

But Morsy's new interior minister, Ahmed Gamal Eddin, 59, a career police officer who liaised with protesters during the anti-Mubarak revolt, has already changed some senior commanders and, after unannounced tours of police stations, sent one officer to a disciplinary committee for mishandling complaints.

Gamal Eddin is respected in the ministry, where one officer called him "strong, successful and strict."

Morsy, for his part, has sought to show he harbors no ill-will towards the police.

"I tell my sons from the honorable police force that the apparatus includes many decent and honest national officers," he told a police graduation ceremony.

Torture and corruption

But it is not only the police he must win over. Morsy needs to convince Egyptians that the once-hated force is changing.

One of the sparks for the anti-Mubarak protest was the killing in police custody of activist Khaled Saeed. And it was the police who used teargas, rubber bullets and even live fire to try to suppress the anti-Mubarak revolt in January 2011.



Egyptians cheered when the police were taken off the streets and the army moved in.

Since then, protesters have frequently besieged the Interior Ministry, seeing it as an emblem of the old order.

The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and other rights groups list a host of abuses from the use of torture to corruption, which includes bribes to traffic police and graft in the issuing of car licenses and in land and factory deals.

The police routinely dismiss accusations of torture and say corruption cases are swiftly investigated.

"Eliminating corruption from the police and security forces will be the true mark of success of Egypt's revolution," said Amr Adly, a lawyer who works for EIPR on corruption issues related to land and state institutions.

"It will mean that the state has succeeded in moving from a suppressing state to a democratic one."

It could take years to rebuild the reputation of the police, but Egyptians are desperate to have them back on the streets.

They complain of petty crime but are alarmed by violent incidents like the storming of the Nile-side hotel, attacks unimaginable under Mubarak when the police had sweeping powers.

Sama Abdel Rawaf, sales manager at the Fairmont, maintained the police delay in reaching her hotel was understandable given the recent turmoil, and added:

"There is a bigger security presence around the hotel now and it is very safe."

Yet security remains a regular topic for talk shows, with callers phoning in with a litany of complaints about theft, thuggery and other security lapses, urging Morsy to act.

"I used to feel safe about sending my kids onto the streets, but now I worry. Every day, I read in the paper about places and people being robbed and attacked," Azza Hamdy, a mother and housewife, told Reuters. "Egypt did not used to be like that."

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/after-army-shake-morsy-turns-police-reform>

- **Egypt is not a religious state, Morsy tells students**

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy (L) talks to Ahmed al-Tayyeb Grand Imam of al-Azhar, after prayer of last Friday of Ramadan, in al-Azhar Mosque, Cairo, 17 August 2012.

At the opening of the first General Conference of Student Unions on

Wednesday, President Mohamed Morsy said Egypt is a civil state, not a military or religious one.

"We are no theocracy," he said.



The president also said that students were marginalized before. "Those times will not come back," he said. "And I shall have no sleep until we attain retribution for the martyrs of the revolution."

"The state will not tolerate crimes against the people, now that we have moved from revolutionary to constitutional legitimacy," he added, stressing the need to draft a new constitution so as to complete the legislative system. "I, meanwhile, use my legislative powers in a most restricted way."

He said he has pinpointed all spots of corruption and means of wasting resources. "Egypt is still resourceful and the young generation is its main asset," he told the students.

"With patience, we shall attain renaissance," he said, reassuring the students that they are free to express themselves actively and contribute to the country's development, be they Muslim or Christian.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-not-religious-state-morsy-tells-students>

- **US waterboarded Libyan Islamists in Gathafi era**

HRW says former Libyan detainee claims to have been waterboarded, another describes form of water torture, handed over to Gathafi regime during Bush administration.

Wider use of waterboarding method by the US

WASHINGTON - The United States waterboarded Libyan Islamists opposed to Moamer Gathafi and handed them over to

his regime for further torture during the Bush administration, a rights group said Thursday.

A new report by the New York-based Human Rights Watch said a former detainee claimed to have been waterboarded and another described a form of water torture, indicating wider use of the method than is officially claimed.

"Not only did the US deliver Gathafi his enemies on a silver platter, but it seems the CIA tortured many of them first," said Laura Pitter, the author of the report.

"The scope of Bush administration abuse appears far broader than previously acknowledged and underscores the importance of opening up a full-scale inquiry into what happened."

The report said a number of members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) -- a movement with alleged links to Al-Qaeda which joined the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that overthrew Gathafi -- were rounded up in several countries in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and held without charge.

At least five described suffering "serious abuses" at two US-run detention facilities in Afghanistan believed to have been operated by the CIA, including "waterboarding and other water torture," it said.



Other abuses included being chained to walls for weeks or months, being beaten and slammed into walls and being kept awake for long periods with loud Western music.

The LIGF fought with NATO-backed rebels in last year's uprising and many members now hold key positions in the emerging government and armed forces.

Human Rights Watch said one of the detainees, Khalid al-Sharif, is now head of the Libyan National Guard.

The rights group said its report was based on documents found in the office of Gathafi's intelligence chief Musa Kusa after the rebels seized Tripoli last year, as well as interviews with detainees who were released after the fall of Gathafi's 40-year regime.

The administration of former president George W. Bush admitted to using waterboarding -- a form of simulated drowning -- on three high-value detainees following the September 11 attacks.

Barack Obama ended the practice when he became president in 2009, calling it torture.

The Bush administration had defended waterboarding as necessary for obtaining intelligence to prevent future attacks.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54228>

- **Libya 7-month oil revenues reach \$30.4 billion**

Seven-month figure of oil, gas earnings is five percent higher than projected.



TRIPOLI - Libya's oil and gas earnings for the first seven months of 2012 reached \$30.4 billion dollars, with oil production running at 1.4 million barrels per day, the National Oil Company said on Tuesday.

"During the period January 1 to July 31, 2012, total production reached 302 million barrels or 1.417 million barrels per day," the NOC said.

It said revenues from oil and gas exports and taxes on foreign oil companies reached \$30.4 billion with an average oil price of 110.5 dollars a barrel.

It said the figure was five percent higher than projected.

Libyan oil production, which was 1.6 million barrels per day before the conflict which toppled Moamer Gathafi in 2011, resumed last September.

Earnings from oil exports account for more than 90 percent of Libya's income.

www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54199

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Mansour: I only defend Lebanon's interests**

Lebanese Foreign Affairs Minister Adnan Mansour responded in an interview published Thursday to accusations that he was defending Syria more than defending Lebanon, and replied that he only served his country's interests.

"I only defend Lebanon and its interests as well as its policies [as stated] by the government. [Statements that I defend Syria more than I defend Lebanon] do not reflect the truth," Mansour told As-Safir newspaper.

Asked about March 14's call to expel Syria's ambassador to Lebanon, Mansour said that such issues should be addressed wisely and objectively.

“It is time that issues are wisely, calmly and objectively tackled. [We cannot at all times] call for expelling a certain envoy or recalling another. There are protocols, agreements and international treaties that [govern] actions when dealing with diplomats,” he said.

Mansour, who conducted the interview after he arrived in Cairo from Mauritania to attend the Arab League foreign ministers’ meeting, also addressed the issue of the disappearance of Imam Moussa al-Sadr.

“I met with Abdullah al-Senussi, Moammar Qaddafi's former spy chief, for four and a half hours. We are still adopting a policy not to engage in details regarding this case until we reach a final result,” he added.

Senussi, a brother-in-law and feared right-hand man of the slain Libyan dictator, was arrested in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott in March and charged two months later for illegal entry and use of forged documents.

On Wednesday, Mauritania extradited Senussi back to Libya.

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

- **Sami Gemayel: Hezbollah’s method not only way to confront Israel**

Kataeb bloc MP Sami Gemayel said in remarks published Thursday that Hezbollah’s method of confronting Israel was not the only option available to Lebanon.

“Any Lebanese citizen has the right to suggest a style [different than Hezbollah’s] to confront Israel. We may choose the Syrian style based on a truce with Israel or the Egyptian style based on peace. Why be ashamed of it?” Gemayel inquired in an interview with Al-Jumhuriya newspaper.

He added that protecting Lebanon cannot be accomplished through “destruction, violence, continued challenge and open struggles.”

“It is our right to suggest [different] styles [to confront Israel] on condition that the decision be in the hands of the Lebanese people who are represented in parliament.”

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

- **Syndicate Coordination Committee to go on strike Thursday**

The Syndicate Coordination Committee announced Wednesday during a meeting that it will go on a widespread strike starting Thursday, according to the National News Agency.

The committee's decision came after the cabinet postponed earlier in the day talks over the controversial issue of ranks and salaries system until Thursday.

In a statement issued at the end of the meeting, the group said that the strike will include all ministries and public administrations in Beirut, in addition to municipalities, public and private high schools and vocational schools.

However, the committee said the strike will not affect activities pertaining to the second round of the official student Baccalaureate exams.

The group added that protests will be held outside ministries and offices of public administrations at 10 a.m.

The committee also said that it will hold a meeting on Thursday afternoon to take the "suitable" position on any possible decision that might be issued by the cabinet regarding the ranks and salaries system issue.

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

6. SYRIA

- **Rebels seek unity as Syria troops batter Aleppo**

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi (L) sits next to Arab League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi during a foreign ministers meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo on Wednesday. (AFP/Egyptian Presidency)

Arab foreign ministers have denounced "crimes against humanity" in Syria, calling on the government to stop the violence immediately, as rebel fighters came under fire on multiple fronts.

Rebels fighting to oust President Bashar al-Assad on Wednesday announced plans to reform and stem the proliferation of

militias in the hope of winning support from the international community which has been reluctant to arm them.

Assad himself came under renewed diplomatic fire from Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who said Syria had become a "terrorist state", and from Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi, who told him to go.

At a meeting in Cairo, Arab foreign ministers condemned "the pursuit of violence, killings and ugly crimes carried out by the Syrian authorities and their shabiha militias against Syrian civilians."

They also condemned "violence and killings of civilians from any side" in a veiled reference to rebels battling the regime.

"The crimes and massacres being carried out are crimes against humanity," said the ministers.

"The UN Security Council must take all the necessary measures to bring to international justice all those responsible for these crimes," the ministers added.

The ministers also denounced Syrian authorities for unleashing heavy weapons against residential areas.

At least 26,000 people have been killed since the uprising against the Damascus regime erupted in March 2011, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

In its latest toll, the watchdog said at least 90 people were killed nationwide on Wednesday alone, most of them civilians.

Forces loyal to the embattled president again trained their heavy weapons on the second city Aleppo which has been the target of a five-week-old government offensive aiming to dislodge the rebels who took over swathes of the commercial capital in July.

Relentless bombardments and food shortages have been reported in zones still held by the rebels, a rag-tag army of military defectors and civilians who have taken up weapons.

A rebel general said on Wednesday that the Free Syrian Army would soon adopt changes aimed at overcoming divisions

and addressing the growing number of militias fighting on its behalf.

Following talks due to end in around 10 days, the FSA would go by the name of the Syrian National Army, General Mustafa al-Sheikh, head of the military council grouping rebel chiefs, told AFP.

"After a long period, we must restructure the army because we fear the proliferation of militias in Syria and want to preserve the country's future," he said.

He said reforms were key to winning the support of the international community which has so far been reluctant to arm the rebels "on the grounds that the [FSA] is not a real institution."

On the battle front, the insurgents attacked Hamdan military airport near Albu Kamal town in the eastern province of Deir az-Zour, the Observatory said.

Having failed to persuade the international community to impose a no-fly zone, the FSA has increasingly targeted airports used by regime attack helicopters and warplanes.

Several blasts were heard in the Damascus district of Jubar as it came under heavy bombardment, and explosions were also heard in Yalda just south of the city, the watchdog said.

In the central city of Homs, the rebel bastion of Khaldiye came under fierce mortar fire, and three children were killed when regime forces bombarded the Ariha area in Homs province.

UN and Arab League peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said on Tuesday that the death toll in the country was "staggering" and the destruction "catastrophic".

Turkey's Erdogan, who turned against Assad when the Syrian leader resorted to force against unarmed protesters, used his strongest language yet against his erstwhile ally.

"The regime in Syria has become a terrorist state," Erdogan said. "Syria is not an ordinary country to us. We do not have the luxury to remain indifferent to what's happening there."

Assad also came under fresh attack from Egypt's president.

"I tell the Syrian regime 'there is still a chance to end the bloodshed'. Now is the time for change... no time to be wasted talking about reform," Morsi told the Arab League ministers in Cairo.

He urged Assad to "take lessons from recent history" and step aside, in reference to Arab Spring revolts that overthrew the dictators of Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Less stridently, China said it supported a political transition in Syria and defended its record during a visit by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi called for all sides to end the fighting, telling a joint news conference with Clinton: "Let me emphasize that China is not partial to any individual or any party."



Clinton reiterated she was "disappointed" by Chinese and Russian vetoes of UN resolutions that would have threatened action against Assad to end the spiraling bloodshed.

Also on Wednesday, Germany's UN Ambassador Peter Wittig, who during September will be the rotating president of the UN Security Council, said that huge hopes have been placed on new Syria peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, but he needs time to evaluate the situation on the ground.

"He has been very mindful not to raise expectations that he cannot fulfill, and I share his concern that he may be overburdened with expectations for sudden change."

"We must understand that as dramatic as the situation on the ground is, he is in an exploration phase to see if he can find an opening and we should give him that time," Wittig warned.

Brahimi took over after the surprise resignation last month of Kofi Annan, whose six-point ceasefire plan to end the fighting in Syria failed to take hold despite

being widely endorsed by the international community.

The United States, meanwhile, unveiled \$21 million in new aid to help those caught up in the conflict, boosting its humanitarian funding to more than \$100 million.

Washington also urged Iraq to ensure that Iranian planes flying over its territory land and face cargo inspections, amid concerns Tehran is shipping arms to the Syrian regime.

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

- **VOL: Syrian fighter jets fly over Lebanon's Wadi Khaled**

Syrian fighter jets flew over the northern Lebanese town of Wadi Khaled on Thursday, Voice of Lebanon (100.5) radio reported.

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

On Monday, the National News Agency reported that Prime Minister Najib Miqati had requested that Syrian authorities be warned of the negative repercussions that are likely to result from shelling Lebanese territory.

Lebanon's political scene is split between supporters of the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, led by Hezbollah, and the Western-backed March 14 alliance.

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

- **Syria rebel army to be reorganized and renamed, general says**

The Free Syrian Army plans to reform to overcome divisions and address the growing number of militias fighting on its behalf, as well as to rename itself, a rebel general said on Wednesday.

Following discussions due to end in around 10 days, the FSA would go by the name of the Syrian National Army, General Mustafa al-Sheikh, head of the military council grouping rebel chiefs, told AFP.

The FSA, which has grown from a rag-tag force of military defectors into a popular guerrilla insurgent movement buoyed by civilian recruits, was also set to appoint General Mohammed Hussein Hajj Ali as its highest-ranking officer.

"After a long period, we must restructure the army because we fear the proliferation of militias in Syria and want to preserve the country's future," said the brigadier general, who was among the first to defect to the FSA.

Among those areas that needed restructuring was the control of funds that reach rebel fighters, in order to "prevent the creation of militias because that is very dangerous," said Sheikh.

While rebel groups are gathered under the auspices of the FSA, the structure of the rebel army remains vague and lacks a strong and cohesive central command.

"There are many groups that claim to be the FSA but do as they please," said the general.

He said reforms were key to winning the support of the international community

which has so far been reluctant to arm the rebels "on the grounds that the [FSA] is not a real institution."

The rebel army has thousands of fighters, among them about 3,000 officers of various ranks, including 70 generals, according to Sheikh.

Unifying the FSA ranks would prevent Sunni majority countries from "sinking into a civil and confessional war after the fall of the regime" of President Bashar al-Assad, who hails from the Alawite offshoot of Shiite Islam.

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

- **Arabs denounce 'crimes against humanity' in Syria**

Arab FMs condemn violence, killings of civilians from any side in veiled reference to Syrian rebels battling Assad regime.

The ministers expressed deep concern for the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria

CAIRO - Arab foreign ministers denounced on Wednesday "crimes against humanity"

being perpetrated in Syria, and called on the Damascus government to stop the violence immediately.

They also condemned "violence and killings of civilians from any side" in a veiled reference to rebels battling the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Capping an ordinary meeting in Cairo, the ministers condemned "the pursuit of violence, killings and ugly crimes carried out by the Syrian authorities and their shabiha militias against Syrian civilians."

"The Syrian government must stop immediately and completely all forms of violence and killings against the Syrian people," the statement said.

"The crimes and massacres being carried out are crimes against humanity," said the ministers.

"The UN Security Council must take all the necessary measures to bring to international justice all those responsible for these crimes," they added.

The ministers also denounced Syrian authorities for unleashing heavy weapons against residential areas.

At least 26,000 people have been killed since the uprising against the Damascus regime erupted in March 2011, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The ministers expressed "deep concern for the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria, which has forced the displacement of 2.5 million people, while hundreds of thousands were forced to flee to neighbouring countries.

According to the UN refugee agency, the number of Syrian refugees rose sharply last month, with more than 100,000 fleeing to seek refuge in neighbouring countries.

It was the highest monthly figure since the conflict erupted in March last year, UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming told reporters in Geneva.

The total number of refugees who have been registered or are awaiting registration in neighbouring countries now

stood at 235,000, she added, with most of them seeking shelter in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon.

Arab foreign ministers also asked Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassem, who heads a ministerial committee on the Syrian crisis, to hold talks with international envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to discuss a new impulse for his mission.

Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister who took up his post on Saturday, said the 18-month old war was "deteriorating steadily" and described the death toll as "staggering."

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi earlier told the ministers it was time for the Syrian regime to step down and added that a resolution of the crisis was an Arab responsibility.

"I tell the Syrian regime 'there is still a chance to end the bloodshed'. Now is the time for change... no time to be wasted talking about reform," Morsi told the Cairo meeting.

"The Syrian blood that is being shed day and night, we are responsible for this,"

Morsi said. "We cannot sleep while Syrian blood is being shed."

"I call on you, Arab foreign ministers, to work hard to find an urgent solution to the tragedy in Syria," Morsi said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54226>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **US drone strike kills five suspected 'Qaeda' militants in Yemen**

Yemeni official claim unmanned drone has targeted house harbouring suspected members of Al-Qaeda in village of Al-Ain in Hadramawt province.

The US is the only country that has drones in the region

ADEN - A strike by an unmanned drone killed five suspected members of Al-Qaeda in eastern Yemen on Wednesday, a security official said.



"Five Al-Qaeda members were killed in the raid" that targeted a house in the village of Al-Ain in Hadramawt province, the official said, requesting anonymity.

He said two middle-ranking members of the local branch of Al-Qaeda were among the dead.

A tribal chief confirmed the raid to AFP, saying it targeted the house of Murad bin Salam, an Al-Qaeda leader in Hadramawt, adding that Salam was among five found dead after the attack.

"Two rockets hit the house... where there were several members of Al-Qaeda," he said. "We found five bodies and the search continues as the house was flattened."

The United States is the only country that has drones in the region and in recent

months has been carrying out strikes on Al-Qaeda targets in the south and east of the country and in the Arabian peninsula.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has taken advantage of the weakness of the central government during a year of protests against ousted president Ali Abdullah Saleh to expand its presence in the impoverished country.

Al-Qaeda loyalists have carried out a spate of deadly attacks against Yemeni security forces and their militia allies since Saleh's successor President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi came to power, pledging to crush the militants.

In an all-out offensive launched in May, the army retook a string of towns in Abyan province in the south.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54213>

- **Bahrain police clash with Shiite protesters**

Security forces used tear gas and shotgun fire to disperse masked protesters who burned tyres, rubbish bins in Manama in

protest at jail sentences against prominent opponents.

One protester was seriously wounded in Karrana

DUBAI - Bahraini police clashed overnight with Shiite demonstrators who took to the streets in protest at jail sentences against prominent opponents, witnesses and the opposition said on Wednesday.

Security forces used tear gas and shotgun fire to disperse masked protesters who burned tyres and rubbish bins at the entrances of Shiite villages west of Manama, and hurled petrol bombs and rocks at security forces, witnesses said.

One protester was seriously wounded in Karrana after receiving a "direct shot in the middle of his body," the main Shiite opposition grouping Al-Wefaq said in a statement.



"Doctors have expressed deep concern over the condition of the wounded man," it said.

The interior ministry said on its Twitter page that a "wounded man was taken to Salmaniya Hospital and that authorities were investigating the situation."

"Your verdicts against our revolutionary figures are unjust!" protesters chanted of an appeal court's decision on Tuesday to uphold jail sentences against 13 leading activists, including seven facing life in prison.

The Sunni-ruled kingdom, home to the US Fifth Fleet and strategically situated across the Gulf from Iran, has continued to witness sporadic Shiite-led demonstrations, mostly outside the capital, since it crushed the protest movement in March last year.

Amnesty International on Tuesday called the verdicts "another blow to justice," adding that they showed "once more that the Bahraini authorities are not on the path of reform but seem rather driven by vindictiveness."

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=54211>

- **UN chief slams jailing of Bahrain opposition leaders**

UN chief Ban Ki-moon Wednesday sharply criticized tough jail terms imposed on 13 leading Bahraini opposition figures, calling on the country's leaders to ensure the right to a fair trial.

"The secretary-general is concerned by the harsh sentences, including life imprisonment, upheld by a Bahrain appeals court," Ban's spokesperson Martin Nesirky said in a statement.

The jail terms, which included seven life sentences, were imposed for charges of plotting to overthrow the Sunni Gulf monarchy during last year's Shiite-led protests.

Ban "urges the Bahraini authorities to allow all defendants to exercise their right to appeal and to ensure that due process is observed."

And he "reiterates his appeal to the Bahraini authorities to ensure the application of international human rights norms, including the right to a fair trial, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly," the statement added.

The UN chief also renewed his belief "that there needs to be an all-inclusive and meaningful national dialogue that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Bahrainis."

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

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Karzai Accuses Taliban Of 'Massacre Of Muslims'**

September 5, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has denounced the Taliban killing of civilians as "massacres of Muslims."

The comments follow a suicide attack on a funeral in eastern Afghanistan on September 4 that killed 25 and injured 30.

In a written statement, Kazai said: "The enemy of Islam and of Afghanistan must understand that they will never succeed by pressuring the public through such brutal acts of terror to achieve their heinous goals."

Karzai also spoke to Haji Hamisha Gul, the district governor of Dur Baba, where the attack happened, and expressed his condolences and sympathies over the loss of his son and members of his community.

Late last month, Karzai traveled to southwestern Nimroz Province to sympathize with the victims of twin suicide attacks in a crowded bazaar that killed at least 36 people.

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

- **Six NATO fuel tankers destroyed in Afghanistan**

Press TV

September 5, 2012

A convoy of at least six US-led NATO fuel tankers has been destroyed after coming under attack in eastern Afghanistan, Press TV reports.

According to Afghan officials, Taliban militants set the tankers on fire on the Kabul-Kandahar highway in Wardak Province on Wednesday.

Taliban militants say that at least 17 tankers were destroyed and nearly 20 drivers and guards killed in the incident.

Further details regarding casualties have not been released by NATO or Afghan officials.

On Tuesday, Taliban militants set fire to a convoy of NATO fuel tankers, claiming the lives of at least 10 people in the western Farah province. The militant group claimed that it killed tens of US-led forces.

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

The United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as part of Washington's so-called war on terror.

The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but, years into the invasion, insecurity continues to rise across the country, despite the presence there of thousands of foreign troops.

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

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

- **'Hundreds' Arrested In Afghanistan Over 'Insider' Attacks**

September 5, 2012
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghan officials say "hundreds" of Afghan soldiers have been arrested or expelled from the army as officials crack down on a rising number of attacks on NATO-led troops by members of the Afghan security forces.

Defense Ministry spokesman General Zahir Azimi told a news conference that

the attacks are "a matter of concern" for the Afghan government.

On September 2, the U.S. military announced that its special forces have suspended training for about 1,000 Afghan police recruits in order to investigate existing security force members.

Members of the Afghan security forces have opened fire on their Western allies more than 30 times so far this year, killing at least 45 foreign troops.

Taliban insurgents claimed responsibility for many of the attacks, saying their fighters have infiltrated the army and police.

Based on reporting by AFP and Reuters

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

- **12 people killed in US-led operation in Afghanistan**

Press TV
September 5, 2012

At least 12 people have been killed in a US-led operation in Afghanistan's central province of Wardak, Press TV reports.

Shahidullah Shahed, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said the operation began days ago at the area of Kota Eshro and finished on Tuesday night.

Shahed also said two Pakistani nationals were also killed in the operation.

Many civilians have been killed in the US-led operations in various parts of Afghanistan over the past months, with Afghans becoming increasingly outraged at the seemingly endless number of the deadly assaults.

The issue of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is highly sensitive and has been a major source of friction between Afghan President Hamid Karzai and the US government.

Violence in Afghanistan has been on the rise in recent months despite the presence of thousands of US-led foreign forces in the country.

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

- **Afghanistan: U.S. To Hand Over Bagram Prison**

September 5, 2012

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghanistan's government has announced it will take full control from the United States next week of the controversial Bagram prison.

President Hamid Karzai's office said in a written statement that a ceremony will take place on September 10 to mark the handover.

Afghanistan and the United States signed an agreement in March to begin a six-month process to transfer control of the jail, north of Kabul, to Afghan authorities.

The prison is located at the Bagram air base, the largest U.S. military base in Afghanistan.

The United States has faced allegations that inmates have been tortured and killed there.

The handover had been a sticking point to the conclusion of a pact between Washington and Kabul covering the long-

term legal status of U.S. troops deployed in Afghanistan.

With reporting by AFP

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

- **Iranian FM Meets Afghan President in Kabul**

Fars News Agency
September 5, 2012

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi held a meeting with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on the sidelines of the 4th meeting of the two countries' joint economic cooperation commission.

During the meeting on Wednesday, Salehi and Karzai reviewed the latest developments in the relations between the two neighboring countries as well as regional and international developments.

The Iranian top diplomat had earlier held a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Zalmi Rassoul, during which the two officials underlined the necessity for the further development of political and economic ties between Tehran and Kabul.

The two foreign ministers are scheduled to ink a cooperation agreement consisting of 50 paragraphs today.

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

Iran has built several roads, power transmission lines, border stations and many other infrastructure projects to better link the two nations.

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

Tehran has repeatedly called for a withdrawal of the US-led foreign troops from Afghanistan, stressing that establishment of peace and security in the war-ravaged country is possible only through cooperation among the regional states.

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



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