



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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**04 JANUARY 2013**  
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## 1. IRAQ

- **Office of the Commander in Chief warns from terrorists' plans against protestors in Ramadi, Falluja**

Baghdad (NINA) – The Office of Commander in Chief, Nuri al-Maliki, warned that there are plans to carry out terrorist attacks against protestors in Ramadi and Falluja.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Jan. 3, the Office said that security agencies learnt that there are armed terrorist groups planning to infiltrate the protestors' rallies in Falluja and Ramadi to carry out terrorist activities against the protestors, aiming to create chaos and draw the armed force to clash with them, which would complicate the situation.

The Office appealed to the protestors to be aware and take precautions to prevent terrorists from slipping amid them.

It affirmed that the armed forces will take all required precautions to protect the protestors from any harm intended against our country.

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

- **Jafari announces expanding political meeting to discuss current events held on Friday**

Baghdad (NINA) – Leader of the National Alliance, Ibrahim al-Jafari, announced that an expanded political meeting to be held on Friday, Jan. 4, to discuss recent events.

Jafari did not specify names of political personalities and parties that will attend the meeting.

In a press release issued on Thursday, Jan. 3, Jafari said, "We have decided to hold on Friday, a political, consultative meeting consisting of Iraq's various political forces to discuss current development.

He added "The slogans the people are chanting did not come from vacuum or lack in wiliness. When they evaluate a politician, they look into his truthiness, commitment and devotion during hard times."

Jarari called on all Iraqis, Sunnis, Shiites, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmans, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Moslems, Christians, Sabe'es and Yezidis to put before their eyes Iraq's safety, unity and its wealth; pointing out that our priorities are centered toward development.

He called for frank, direct and unconditional dialogue between Iraq's politicians to enable them reach solutions to all outstanding and disputed issues; and that any fault found that requires change, must be done in a constitutional way, even if it requires amendment made to the Constitution.

He called for rejecting foreign intervention in Iraq's affairs, whether regional or international. He pointed out respect to the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament and President of Kurdistan Region; if they make mistakes, then we have to lead them to the right through Constitutional means.

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

- **Saadi: "We are with the protesters in Anbar and their legitimate demands.**

Ramadi / NINA /-- Sheikh Abdul-Malik al-Saadi, said : " We are standing with the protesters in their legitimate demands that need to be met by the government in Baghdad.

Sheikh Abdul-Malik al-Saadi added in a statement to NINA : " We are with sit-ins of Anbar and with tribal folks support and participation of other provinces as their demands are legal, constitutional and on the government must speed up the implementation of these legitimate demands and not to neglect the concerns of the citizen aside.

"He stressed that the demands raised by the protestors are useful noting that Defense Minister and the committee formed by the Council of Ministers and the Government of Anbar as well as the committee overseeing the sit-ins of Anbar must seriously discuss those demands and implemented quickly without neglecting any demand and devote efforts to prevent sectarian and strife between the sons of Iraq all.

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

- **Thousands of citizens continue sinc eighth days demonstration in Alahrar courtyard central Mosul.**

Mosul / NINA /-- Thousand of citizens continue demonstrations for the eighth day in a row, representing different areas of Nineveh province, demanding releasing of detainees and innocent prisoners and stop exclusion and marginalization policy.

The protesters expressed in statements to media that they would continue to demonstrate until the implementation of their legitimate and just demands of the demonstrators in Anbar, Salahuddin and Nineveh provinces.

Nineveh provincial council earlier decided during a meeting held on Wednesday, to extend the general strike of government departments in Nineveh until next Monday.

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

- **Northern Babil blast casualties up to 87 killed, wounded**

Hilla (NINA) – The number of casualties resulted from earlier in the day car bomb explosion in Mosayab district, northern Babil province has increased up to 87 killed and wounded.

Source at Mosayab Hospital, 50 km north of Hilla, said that the number of casualties has increased up to 27 killed and 60 wounded.

He added that among the wounded the police commander of Jurf al-Sakhar district, Brigadier Hamzeh Atiya, and two of his bodyguards.

Earlier in the afternoon, a car bomb exploded against the visitors of the Arba'een, while on their way back from Karbala.

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

- **Ankara-Baghdad tension harmful to region: Lawmaker**

An Iranian lawmaker has condemned Turkey's interference in the internal affairs of Iraq saying that the political tension between Ankara and Baghdad is harmful to the region.



Ahmad Bakhshayesh-Ardestani said on Monday that Ankara is trying to put pressure on the Iraqi government by supporting the Iraqi Kurdish region and the country's Sunni population.

"By getting close to the Kurdistan region [of Iraq] and giving refuge to [former Iraqi Vice President] Tariq al-Hashemi, Ankara is trying to find leverage against Baghdad," he said.

Hashemi has been sentenced to death in Iraq over involvement in terrorist activities.

Member of Iran Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee noted that Turkey executes West's plans in the region and is trying to create tension in [anti-Israel] resistance front, which comprises [the Lebanese] Hezbollah, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and Iraq in order to exert pressure on them.

Turkey-Iraq relations turned sour last year after Ankara expressed support for fugitive Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and gave him refuge.

Last week, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused the Iraqi government of sectarian behavior. Erdogan's comments drew sharp criticism from Iraqi political activists and politicians.

Iraqi lawmaker Yasin Majid on January 1, 2012, demanded the expulsion of Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad in protest against anti-Iraq remarks made by Erdogan.

Furthermore, Turkish airstrikes in northern Iraq on Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) bases have angered Iraqi authorities, prompting them to call on Turkish officials to stop the attacks.

The PKK has been fighting for an autonomous Kurdish region inside Turkey since the 1980s. The conflict has left tens of thousands of people dead.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/03/281602/turkeyiraq-tension-harmful-to-region/>

## 2. IRAN

- **Israel disarmament key to resolve Iran nuclear issue: Gul**

Turkish President Abdullah Gul has stressed the importance of eradicating nuclear weapons in the region, saying the atomic disarmament of Israel would be the key to resolving outstanding issues pertaining to Iran's nuclear energy program.



"That is the way I see it. Because that route will help them solve the fundamental problems in the Middle East that affect the whole world," Gul said in an interview with Foreign Affairs magazine.

The Turkish president expressed his country's opposition to the existence of nuclear weapons in the region as not possessed by Turkey herself, saying, "We are not underestimating this matter in any way. But we are more realistic."

In response to a question about Ankara's stance on Iran's nuclear energy program, he urged "a more comprehensive solution and approach" to the outstanding issues.

Israel, the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, is widely known to have between 200 and 400 nuclear warheads.

The Israeli regime rejects all the regulatory international nuclear agreements -- the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in particular -- and refuses to allow its nuclear facilities to come under international regulatory inspections.

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

Iran argues that as a signatory to the NPT 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/2013/01/04/281704/israel-disarmament-key-to-iran-nissue/>

- **US imposes fresh sanctions on Tehran, including ban on Iranian media**

The United States has imposed fresh sanctions on Iran that include bans on the country's media despite Washington's claims of protecting freedom of speech.



The new bans are included in the \$633-billion military bill for 2013 which US President Barack Obama signed into law on Wednesday night.

The anti-Iran sanctions portion of the bill, among other economic features, blacklists the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and its president Ezzatollah Zarghami and will block all the IRIB assets and prevent others from doing business with it.

The sanction against IRIB is an attempt by the West to silence Iranian media. It is on top of another flagrant violation of freedom of speech by satellite providers Eutelsat SA and Intelsat SA which stopped the broadcast of several Iranian satellite channels in October.

In November, the Hong Kong-based Asia Satellite Telecommunications Co. Ltd. (AsiaSat) also took all Iranian channels off air in East Asia under pressure from the US.

In a similar move in December, Spain's top satellite company Hispasat ordered its satellite provider Overon to take Iranian channels Press TV and Hispan TV off the air.

The restrictions on Iranian media are interpreted as an attempt to silence the truth-telling media.

This comes as US lawmakers say the fresh anti-Iran sanctions portion of the bill is part of measures aimed at pressuring Iran to halt its nuclear energy program.

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

Over the false allegation, Washington and the European Union have imposed illegal unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Iran refutes the allegations and argues that as a signatory to the 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/2013/01/04/281682/us-imposes-sanction-on-iranian-media/>

- **Minister: Two South Pars Phases to Come Online in Near Future**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's oil minister announced that two phases of the South Pars gas field will come online by the end of the current Iranian calendar year (on March 20, 2013).

Phases 15 and 16 of South Pars oil and gas field will be operational by the end of current Iranian year, Oil Minister Rostam Qassemi said on Wednesday.

He told reporters that executive works for phases 17 and 18 of South Pars gas field are well on right track and they will come on stream in the next Iranian year on schedule.

Iran is currently producing 300 mcmcpd of gas from South Pars.

In November, an Iranian deputy oil minister said a sum of 80 billion dollars will be invested in the development and completion of South Pars gas field phases.

The South Pars gas field covers an area of 9,700 square kilometers, 3,700 square kilometers of which are in Iran's territorial waters in the Persian Gulf. The remaining 6,000 square kilometers, i.e. the North Dome, are in Qatar's territorial waters.

The South Pars gas field holds 8 percent of total gas reserves of the world and half of the country's proven gas reserves as well as is the host of the most important industrial complexes of the country and the most important part of oil industry's value chain.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107132709>

- **Syrian PM Emphasizes Need to Further Strengthen Ties with Iran**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Syrian Prime Minister Wael Nader al-Halqi in a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Damascus Mohammad Reza Sheibani stressed the necessity for the further development of all-out relations with Iran, specially in economic and trade fields.



During the meeting in Damascus on Wednesday, Halqi underlined the need for further strengthening the two countries' economic and commercial ties, as well as establishing a special mechanism aimed at facilitating the ongoing bilateral interactions.

He also appreciated Iran's efforts aimed at providing the urgently needed medical items, including medicine, for his country.

Iran and Syria have forged an alliance ever since the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the two countries' officials exchange visits on a regular basis.

The two countries enjoy strategic relations in a wide variety of fields.

Recently, Iran and Syria endorsed several memoranda of understanding (MoUs) on cooperation in the power, water and health sectors.

The agreements were signed during a visit to Tehran by a senior Syrian delegation in July.

The first MoU was endorsed by the Iranian Energy Ministry and the Syrian Electricity Ministry on supplying electricity as well as transmission and distribution equipment to Syria, building power generation plants and installing automatic remote reading systems in the country by Iran.

Another agreement covered establishment of waste-water treatment plants and setting up a water resource management plan in Syria.

The two countries' officials also discussed sales of medical equipment and medicine to Syria.

Tehran and Damascus agreed to cooperate to export technical and engineering services and implement projects in such areas as water and waste and dam building.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107132707>

### 3. SYRIA

- **Deadly car bomb strikes northern Damascus**

Activists report at least nine people killed in capital's Masakin Barzeh neighborhood and death toll expected to rise.

At least nine people have been killed when a car bomb exploded in the Syrian capital Damascus, a Syrian activist group has said.



The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said on Friday the death toll in the blast, which occurred late on Thursday in the capital's Masakin Barzeh neighborhood, is expected to rise because many of the wounded were in critical condition.

The Observatory, which relies on a network of fighters and doctors to monitor the conflict in Syria, said the attack occurred in a neighbourhood with a large population of Alawites, an offshoot of Shia Islam and the minority community of President Bashar al-Assad.

Syria's state news service also reported the blast but did not give a number of dead or wounded. It said the bomb targeted cars that were lined up to get gas and blamed the attack on "terrorists", the government's shorthand for rebels seeking to topple Assad.

The pro-regime Ikhbariyeh TV station said some 30 civilians were killed or wounded in the blast.

Despite gains in other parts of Syria by rebels seeking to topple Assad, he has largely kept his grip on the capital.

But Damascus has been targeted by a number of large bombings, many of which appear to target government buildings. Some have been claimed by the jihadist group Jabhat al-Nusra, which the US has designated a terrorist organisation.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Thursday's blast.

Masakin Barzeh is a middle-class neighborhood northeast of downtown that is home to many government employees.

The UN says more than 60,000 people have been killed in Syria since the start of the uprising in March 2011. The conflict has since evolved into a civil war.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/01/20131445611225285.html>

- **Fighting rages for control of Syrian air base**

State media says troops have repelled attack on key military air base in northeast Idlib province.

Rebels have stormed parts of Taftanaz military airport in Syria's northwest Idlib province, but state media reported on Thursday that the fighters had been repelled by troops.



A rebel speaking from near the Taftanaz base overnight said the base's main sections were still in loyalist hands but fighters had managed to infiltrate and destroy a helicopter and a warplane on the ground.

Rami Abdulrahman, head of the opposition-aligned Syrian Observatory for Human Rights which monitors the conflict from Britain, said as many as 800 fighters were involved in the assault, including Islamists from Jabhat al-Nusra, a powerful group that Washington considers a terrorist organisation.

Taftanaz is mainly a helicopter base, used for missions to resupply army positions in the north, many of which are cut off by road because of rebel gains, as well as for dropping crude "barrel bombs" of explosives on rebel-controlled areas.

Rebels have been besieging air bases across the north in recent weeks, in the hope it will reduce the government's power to carry out air strikes and resupply regime-held areas.

Near Minakh, another northern air base that rebels have surrounded, government forces have retaliated by regularly shelling and bombing nearby towns.

Ongoing airstrikes

Meanwhile, opposition activists said warplanes struck a residential building in another rebel-held northern town, Hayyan, killing at least eight civilians.

Video footage showed men carrying dismembered bodies of children and dozens of people searching for victims in the rubble of the destroyed building, shouting: "God is greatest."

The provenance of the video could not be independently confirmed.

In addition to their tenuous grip on the north, the rebels also hold a crescent of suburbs on the edge of Damascus, which have come under bombardment by government forces that control the centre of the capital.

On Wednesday, according to opposition activists, dozens of people were incinerated in an inferno caused by an airstrike on a petrol station in a Damascus suburb where residents were lining up for precious fuel.

The civil war in Syria has become the longest and bloodiest of the conflicts that rose out of uprisings across the Arab world in the past two years.

More than 60,000 people have been killed in the 21-month-old uprising and civil war, the UN said this week, sharply raising the death toll estimate in a conflict that shows no sign of ending.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/01/201313144923557366.html>

- **Syria death toll rises to ‘truly shocking’ 60,000: United Nations**

The United Nations has lifted the Syria conflict’s death toll to 60,000, in a dramatic indication of the brutal extent of the crackdown in the country during the uprising which developed into civil war.



U.N. Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay said in Geneva that researchers, who cross-referenced seven sources over five months of analysis, had listed 59,648 people killed in Syria between March 15, 2011 and Nov. 30, 2012.

“The number of casualties is much higher than we expected and is truly shocking,” she said. “Given that there has been no let-up in the conflict since the end of November, we can assume that more than 60,000 people have been killed by the beginning of 2013.”

The toll does not breakdown the deaths by ethnicity or by whether those killed were civilians, opposition fighters or Syrian regime soldiers.

Previously, the opposition-linked Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group had put the toll at around 45,000 confirmed dead but said the real number was likely to be higher.

In reference to the U.N. figure, Pillay said Wednesday that “although this is the most detailed and wide-ranging analysis of casualty figures so far, this is by no means a definitive figure.”

“We have not been able to verify the circumstances of each and every death, partly because of the nature of the conflict and partly because we have not been allowed inside Syria since the unrest began in March 2011.”

The U.N. High Commissioner added that “once there is peace in Syria, further investigations will be necessary to discover precisely how many people have died, and in what circumstances, and who was responsible for all the crimes that have been committed.”

The analysts cited by the U.N. official noted that 60,000 was likely to be an underestimate of the actual number of deaths, given that reports containing insufficient information were excluded from the list, and that a significant number of killings might not have been documented.

The analysis - which the U.N. High Commissioner stressed is “a work in progress, not a final product” - shows a steady increase in the average number of documented deaths per month since the beginning of the conflict, from around 1,000 per month in the summer of 2011 to an average of more than 5,000 per month since July 2012.

The greatest number of reported killings have occurred in Homs (12,560), rural Damascus (10,862) and Idlib (7,686), followed by Aleppo (6,188), Daraa (6,034) and Hama (5,080).

Latest violence

In the latest violence, dozens were killed in a rebellious Damascus suburb when a government air strike turned a petrol station into an inferno, incinerating drivers who had rushed there for a rare chance to fill their tanks, activists said.

“I counted at least 30 bodies. They were either burnt or dismembered,” said Abu Saeed, an activist who arrived in the area an hour after the 1 p.m. (1100 GMT) raid in Muleiha, a suburb on the eastern edge of the capital, he told Reuters news agency.

It was not immediately clear if the bomb blasts caused the storage tanks to explode, but the scene was engulfed in fire, which suggests that was the case.

“MIG warplane strikes on Eastern Ghuta! Dozens of martyrs!” a man shouted out as he and a fellow cameraman raced toward plumes of smoke to survey the damage in a gruesome video posted on YouTube.

A man stood wailing to God as he held what was left of his friend, a head and a shredded torso with a bloodied shirt still hanging on flaps of skin.

A fire extinguisher lay in the street as dozens of men rushed to dig out any survivors from beneath heaping piles of metal and steel I-beams as fires raged beside them.

One man, his face covered in blood, was helped out from the rubble.

The camera panned to show the body of another man on the hood of a car, charred from head to toe, his severed leg splayed out beside him as a fire ravaged the right side of his body.

Another man was still atop a motorcycle in the middle of the fire, his body engulfed in flames.

Some bystanders stood in shock, staring into space, surrounded by scattered burning vehicles, heaps of metal and pools of blood still wet on the pavement.

In another video, a man's leg is charred down to the bone. The camera continues to show his entire burned and mutilated body, ending at his face. The man was still conscious and coughing up blood.

The authenticity of the video could not immediately be verified.

Meanwhile 12 members of the same family, most of them children, were killed in an air raid in Moadamiyet al-Sham, a town southwest of Damascus which is partly held by rebels, the Observatory said.

Warplanes also attacked insurgent strongholds across other parts of the capital.

The Observatory gave an initial toll of 59 people killed nationwide on Wednesday.

In the north, rebels launched a major attack to take a military airport, and said they had succeeded in destroying a fighter plane and a helicopter on the ground.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/01/03/258377.html?PHPSESSID=9gi4m5oj3ajaqe7u58tutgl215>

## 4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **'Egypt stops US-made missiles destined for Gaza'**

American-made anti-tank, anti-aircraft missiles are seized near El-Arish ahead of smuggling into Gaza, reports say.

Egyptian security forces in the Sinai Peninsula intercepted a shipment of American-made anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles destined for the Gaza Strip, Palestinian news agency Ma'an and Egyptian media reported on Friday.

After receiving intelligence on the weapons shipment, the Egyptian Interior Ministry raided the location south of El-Arish, Ma'an reported.

According to the report, security forces discovered six US-manufactured missiles being prepared for smuggling into the Palestinian coastal strip. The missiles were 75cm long, with a 40cm diameter and a range of two kilometers, Ma'an reported.

Although not explicitly mentioned in the Israel-Hamas cease-fire agreement that ended hostilities between the two late last year, statements by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu indicated that arrangements were being made with Egypt and the US to stymie the smuggling of materiel into Gaza.

Late last month, Egyptian armed forces foiled an attempt to smuggle 17 French-made TDI model rockets into the Gaza Strip, the Egypt Independent quoted an anonymous military source as saying.

According to the report, Egyptian military forces, in cooperation with local Bedouins, stopped the smuggling attempt in northern Sinai. The rockets intercepted were caliber 68 mm, which have a range of three kilometers.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=298422>

- **Gaza rallies ahead of Fatah anniversary**

GAZA CITY (Ma'an) -- Palestinian supporters of Fatah started massing in the main squares in the Gaza Strip ahead of an official anniversary festival for the party on Friday.

A Ma'an correspondent said traffic was at a standstill around Saraya square in Gaza City on



Thursday night, where flag-waving crowds gathered to celebrate Fatah's 48th year.

Supporters carried Fatah banners and chanted slogans of the party, in the first mass rally since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007.

Similar marches took places in cities across the Gaza Strip on Thursday evening, witnesses told Ma'an.

Earlier Thursday, Fatah founder Abdul Aziz Shaheen, known as Abu Ali, entered Gaza for the first time in more than five years, accompanied by Fatah Central Committee member and former PA security chief Jibril Al-Rajoub, as well as Osama Al-Qawasmi, the spokesman of Fatah in the West Bank.

Friday's festival in Saraya square will feature cultural performances and a recorded speech by President Mahmoud Abbas.

It will be the first time that Hamas has allowed Fatah to hold such events since it took power in a violent confrontation that began over five years of bitterly divided governments.

Fatah also permitted a Hamas anniversary rally in the West Bank earlier this month for the first time, raising hopes of improving relations between the rival factions.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553309>

- **Israeli undercover force raids Jenin, 2 hurt**

JENIN (Ma'an) -- An Israeli undercover force conducted an arrest raid in the West Bank city of Jenin on Thursday morning, sparking clashes with Palestinian residents.



Agents dressed as Palestinians, accompanied by army units, entered the industrial zone in the city and surrounded a bakery and number of shops.

During a raid on the home of 93-year-old Amneh Hisnawi, who was alone in the house, Israeli army dogs attacked the elderly woman, requiring her evacuation to Israeli hospital.

An army spokesman said she was lightly injured after being bitten by a dog belonging to security personnel, treated on the scene, and then transferred by forces to an Israeli facility for further treatment.

He said the raid on Jenin was to arrest a Palestinian suspected of terror activity. Military sources said the suspect was not at home, so the force withdrew.

During the operation, around 500 Palestinians hurled rocks, firebombs, and burned tires, and forces responded with riot dispersal means, the spokesman said.

Fadi Ijawi, 23, was wounded in the leg by live bullet and taken to a Palestinian hospital, a Ma'an reporter said. Dozens of Palestinians also suffered tear gas inhalation.

Locals also told Ma'an that one man was detained during the raid, identified as Amjad Ighbariyeh.

The undercover operation comes after dozens were injured on Tuesday in a similar incident in nearby village Tamoun.

At least thirty people were injured with live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas during the clashes, after undercover forces arrested Murad Bani Odeh, a member of Islamic Jihad.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553135>

- **PLO studies steps to join UN treaties, bodies**

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- The PLO's ruling body met Thursday and affirmed the need to go to the UN Security Council for a resolution against Israeli settlement building on Palestinian land.



The PLO Executive Committee stressed the State of Palestine's commitment to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all UN charters, a statement after the meeting, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas, said.

The group considered a detailed report on the implementation of the UN resolution accepted Palestine as a non-member state on Nov. 29.

It includes concrete steps on accession to international treaties and joining other international bodies, the PLO said, without elaborating.

The PLO will urgently convene a meeting of the Central Council, the second-tier leadership group in the body.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553276>

- **Over 30 thousand join Fatah festival in Nablus**

NABLUS (Ma'an) -- More than 30 thousand people participated in a festival for the 48th anniversary of Fatah in Nablus on Thursday.



The festival began with a parade of security forces who marched from headquarter of the

national security of Al-Junaid prison towards the location of the main rally near Al-Najah university.

Member of central committee of Fatah Abbas Zaki delivered a speech saying that those who think that the Palestinian people are weak is delusional. "We are strong and the world has changed specially after the international recognition of our Palestinian state," he said.

"Arabs and the international community will not leave Palestinians on their own. Palestine has now become a state and received an international recognition," he said.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553305>

- **Report: Israeli Ex-Spy Chief Criticizes Pm On Iran**

JERUSALEM (AP) -- A recently retired Israeli spy chief says Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu acted irresponsibly regarding Iran's nuclear program and accuses him of prioritizing personal concerns over national interests.

Yuval Diskin, chief of Israel's Shin Bet intelligence agency from 2005 to 2011, has voiced similar criticisms before.

Diskin says Netanyahu tried to convince him and his colleagues to approve what he called an "illegal" decision to attack Iran. He describes attending a "bizarre" meeting with Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and then-foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, in which they discussed the Iranian nuclear threat over cigars and liquor.

Diskin spoke in an interview to a filmmaker who made a documentary about Israeli spymasters. The interview appeared Friday in Israel's daily Yediot Ahronot.

Netanyahu's office in a text-messaged statement called Diskin's comments "baseless."

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML\\_ISRAEL\\_IRAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_ISRAEL_IRAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

- **Hamas Imposes a Media Blackout Throughout Gaza Strip**

About This Article

Summary :

The decision to forbid local reporters in Gaza from working for Israeli media outlets will only deepen the sense of estrangement and alienation between Israelis and Palestinians, writes Shlomi Eldar.

Original Title:

Hamas Imposes a Media Blackout through the Gaza Strip

Author: Shlomi Eldar

Translated on: Thu, Jan 3, 2013

Translated by: Danny Wool

They're called "stringers" in the professional jargon. In fact, they are professional journalists who work part-time reporting from "the inside" for some external media outlet. What they most frequently provide is first-person coverage about events taking place around them. They have proven themselves to be indispensable, especially in situations when there is no possibility of outside journalists entering the region, just as it is the case in Gaza. In those circumstances, they become the lone voice able to tell the real story of what is happening there.

In an interview with Al-Monitor's reporter in Gaza, Rami Almeghari, the head of the Hamas press office Ihab al-Ghosain explained the decision by insinuating that the articles published by those journalists were used by Israeli intelligence.

In all honesty, I know nothing about the quality or quantity of information that Israeli intelligence could derive from those journalists. I do, however, have a strong feeling that "Israeli intelligence" has a serious problem if it is dependent on their reports. The reason is simple. The actual number of such reports is miniscule. For the most part, the Israeli media lost interest in Gaza and its people. Israelis tend to be indifferent, turning their attention to Gaza only in the midst of some

military operation or other, like the one that occurred there last month. Any empathy Israelis might have felt toward the residents of Gaza has long since disappeared. For many Israelis, the land beyond the Erez Checkpoint and border crossing, just a 50-minute drive from Tel Aviv, is considered to be “Hamastan,” ( Hamas land) far beyond the Ridge of Darkness.

Nevertheless, a handful of Israeli media outlets deemed it necessary for professional and journalistic reasons to employ “stringers” in the Gaza Strip to submit reports from the inside, mostly features. And just who are those people who tell their story from the inside?

One of them is Abeer Ayoub, who has been writing for Haaretz for the past few months. In an interview with Al-Monitor she said, “I have always focused on human-interest stories from Gaza and the newspaper would accept and publish them. I do not see that such a decision by the government is helpful.” She went on to say that she told the Hamas authorities in Gaza that such a blanket ban would in no way prevent Israeli media outlets from publishing news items about Gaza. The big difference, she pointed out, was that without these stringers, “we, Palestinians, will lose the chance to voice our Palestinian story to the Israeli public.”

Another journalist who reported regularly from Gaza was Sami al-Ajrani, formerly a reporter for Channel 2 and more recently a reporter for Maariv. His nine-year-old daughter, Bisan, was injured during Operation Pillar of Defense while playing in the courtyard of her home with her twin sister, Ruba. Three of her fingers were cut off by shrapnel during an IDF attack on a squad firing rockets into Israel. At that very moment, her father was actually covering the funeral of Ahmed Jabari for Israel’s Channel 2 News. Jabari was assassinated in the first half hour of the military operation [ Nov. 14].

The third journalist working in Gaza, producer Mouein al-Hilo, was someone that I brought to Channel 10 News about five years ago, in the wake of the Hamas coup, right after the IDF banned Israeli reporters from entering the Gaza Strip. Suddenly al-Hilo, and other “stringers” like him, had become indispensable. They were now our eyes and ears in Gaza.

I first met Mouein al-Hilo almost 10 years ago, while covering a story in Gaza. His brother Nahed's home was hit by an Israeli mortar shell during a military operation to destroy metal workshops suspected of being used to manufacture Qassam rockets. Two of Mouein's nephews, the sons of his brother Nahed, were killed. One of those casualties, Said al-Hilo, was a soccer player, who was once a member of the Palestinian team that played a friendly match in Norway against an Israeli team. Then the Second Intifada erupted, and the hope for peace that permeated the region was stopped dead in its tracks.

Nahed, the grieving father, pointed to a second-story window that had survived the blast. His two granddaughters, Said's children, were peeking out from behind its half-open blinds.

"So tell me," he asked, tears streaming down his face, "who will take care of them now? Who? Their father was killed, and after working in Israel for 35 years, I can't provide for them anymore. Now that you've killed my sons, I can't work for you either." Nahed was referring to the regulation that the work permit of any Palestinian who had a family member injured or killed was to be revoked; the security forces considered that person to have a motive for revenge.

As if to confirm this, Nahed suddenly let out a blood-curling scream: "I'll commit the next terrorist attack in Israel!" A long, heavy silence followed. Only after he noticed my stunned expression did he try to calm me down. "I have lots of friends in Tel Aviv. Lots. Who would I attack? My own friends?"

Mouein and I have since become friends. After the Hamas coup, we began to collaborate professionally as well. He filmed news items and stories from the Gaza Strip, which I worked on from the editing suite in Tel Aviv, adding narration and preparing them for broadcast. It was a classic example of journalistic cooperation. We tried to provide the television audience in Israel with a window into the situation faced by Gaza's residents. It was an image that many Israelis preferred not to see, especially since Hamas seized power. It showed the distress they experienced on a day-to-day basis, unemployment, and their efforts to find viable solutions that would allow them to survive, when there was no petrol, no electricity, and no hope.

And yet, as hard as I try, I can't remember a single report that anyone could have used to obtain "intelligence."

By the way, at that very time, Hamas and even more militant organizations like Islamic Jihad and the Resistance Committees recognized the importance of Israeli public opinion. Moreover, many activists serving time in Israeli prisons watched Israeli television stations no less than Israelis themselves did. More than once I heard that many of those prisoners, who have since been released and now speak a good Hebrew, still prefer to watch Israeli broadcasts, instead of Al Jazeera or Al Arabiya.

Actually, Ihab al-Ghosain himself, the head of the Hamas press office who is so worried about "classified intelligence" being leaked, was interviewed by the Israeli media on numerous occasions. He even allowed Mouein and me almost free reign to film in Gaza, so that we could bring those images to an indifferent Israeli public.

And so, every so often we were able to breach that wall of apathy. The report that I remember most of all was about the al-Jerushi family, all of whose children came down with a lethal skin disease, which caused two of them to die a horrible death. As a result of that report, two other children, a one-year-old infant and a six-year-old girl, were brought to Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv, where they received treatment that saved their lives. An Israeli businessman covered the cost of the treatment, while dozens and perhaps hundreds of Israelis showed up at the hospital to donate money, food, and toys to those ailing children.

In the five-and-a-half years that we worked together, Mouein and I tried to present the Israeli public with a different perspective on Gaza than the one that was so familiar to them. It was important for us to show that there are people there who simply want to live their lives in peace, to eat well, earn a living, and provide a good education to their children, just like we do. We tried to show our Israeli audience that not everyone there hates us.

But now, in a rash decision, Hamas has imposed a media blackout — an iron curtain of sorts — across the Gaza Strip. From now on, Gaza will no longer be some spot on the map, just 50 minutes from Tel Aviv. From now on, it will be light years away.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/01/mediawall-shlomi-eldar.html#ixzz2GzoY58eD>

## 5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Islamic Jihad vows to fight the Jews if they return to Egypt**

The Islamic Jihad movement has called on the Freedom and Justice Party's Essam al-Erian to resign from his role as advisor to the president and apologize to the Egyptian people for his statement asking Egyptian Jews to leave Israel and reclaim their properties back at home.



Erian had triggered controversy over his remarks this week when he said this would pave the way for the Palestinians to regain their occupied land.

He also blamed President Nasser for deporting the Jews after the establishment of Israel.

“We shall fight them vigorously if they return, especially the Egyptian-Israeli Jews,” said Mohamed Abou Samra, the leading figure in the Islamic Jihad movement. “Islamic Sharia says they deserve to be killed.”

“Erian is violating religion to be a national hero for the Jews at the expense of the Islamists,” he added. “And the Brotherhood’s denouncement of his remarks was too mild.”

“They will destroy the economy and foment sedition,” he said. “Their return will be over our dead bodies.”

“We will continue fighting the Jews until the liberation of Palestine or Doomsday,” he said.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/islamic-jihad-vows-fight-jews-if-they-return-egypt>

- **Egypt says to reassure IMF in January visit**

An International Monetary Fund mission will visit Egypt in January for talks on a US\$4.8 billion loan agreement that was postponed last month at Cairo's behest because of political turmoil in the country, the government spokesperson said on Thursday.



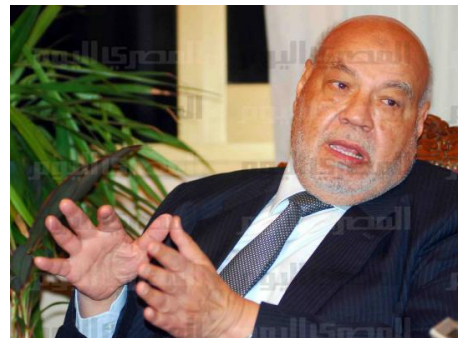
"They are coming this month," Cabinet spokesperson Alaa al-Hadidi told Reuters when asked about the timing of the visit. "The purpose is to reassure them that what we agreed on last time is still there, and nothing has changed," he said.

The agreement was signed at staff level in November but final ratification was postponed last month after President Mohamed Morsy cancelled tax increases believed to be part of a package of austerity measures agreed as part of the deal.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-says-reassure-imf-january-visit>

- **Justice Minister outlines new articles for draft protest law**

Justice Minister Ahmed Mekky announced on Thursday new articles that would be added to the draft law on the right to protest, which is currently up for discussion in the Shura Council.



The new articles would stipulate that demonstrations can only be dispersed in the presence of a judge, and demonstrations can only be banned by a court ruling.

Every citizen has the right to demonstrate, Mekky added, but all countries have certain regulations on demonstrations, such as banning demonstrations in front of the seat of government. Many of these regulations exist to safeguard the demonstrators themselves, he claimed.

The draft law was prepared by the Shura Council's Legislative Committee in coordination with the Human Rights Committee. It has been criticized for its broad restrictions on demonstrations and strikes.

The 26-article bill says that organizers of any public assembly or peaceful gathering must obtain permission from the authorities three days ahead of time. The police have the right to attend any such assembly and shut it down if it discusses or does anything not outlined in the application for permission, "if there is shouting," or if there is any promotion of "sedition."

A public assembly is defined in the bill as "any meeting in a public or private place that people can enter without having an individual invitation in their hands."

Justice Ministry spokesperson Ahmed Roshdy stressed that the demonstrating bill will not grant the Interior Ministry the right to reject any demonstration, just those that are not in accordance with the law.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/justice-minister-outlines-new-articles-draft-protest-law>

- **Muslim Brotherhood took 'billions' from Obama: Egypt lawyers**

Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood has been accused of taking 10 billion Egyptian pounds (U.S. \$1.5 billion) from the American government, according to claims by Egyptian lawyers.

An immediate investigation into the accusation was ordered by Prosecutor General Talaat Abdallah on Thursday.

The lawyers, Mohamed Ali Abd al-Wahab and Yasser Mohamed Sayab, filed the complaint against the Muslim Brotherhood for the allegedly illegal money transaction, Egypt's private daily Al-Masry Al-Youm reported on Jan. 3.

The complaint noted that Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for the recent U.S. presidential election, had said that \$1.5 billion was given to support Egypt's Brotherhood by the Obama administration.

In addition, the lawyers accused the Muslim Brotherhood of having armed mercenaries or a "third party," who have instigated violence during and after the revolutionary uprising in the country.

The armed mercenaries are trained in the desert, which lies between the city of Alexandria and Marsa Matrouh in Egypt, the lawyers alleged.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/01/04/258553.html?PHPSESSID=9gi4m5oj3ajaqe7u58tutgl215>

- **Sudan, S. Sudan presidents to meet in summit to defuse tension**

Leaders of Sudan and South Sudan are due to meet Friday in the Ethiopian capital to push for progress on stalled economic, oil and security deals that were drafted to ease tension between the former civil war foes.



The meeting between Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and his Southern counterpart Salva Kiir comes despite accusations from Juba on Thursday that Khartoum had launched aerial and ground attacks inside South Sudan.

Southern army spokesman Philip Aguer told AFP news agency that Sudanese troops had struck inside South Sudan on Wednesday, just as aircraft were bombing the South's remote north Raja region of Western Bahr el-Ghazal state.

"They attacked on Wednesday, and the fighting continued until late in the afternoon," he said, adding that the number of casualties had not been confirmed.

Meanwhile, both leaders have signed agreements at a meeting in the Ethiopian capital in September to resume oil exports and secure the volatile border, but sharing deep mistrust after fighting one of Africa's longest civil wars, neither country has implemented the deals.

Both countries badly need the oil exports, for which Juba has to pay Khartoum millions of dollars. But analysts say they also need the confrontation with the other side to shore up domestic legitimacy and divert attention from their crumbling economies and widespread corruption.

The African Union, backed by Western powers, urged them to hold Friday's talks to try again to reach a deal.

Sudan's state news agency SUNA said late on Thursday Bashir would meet Kiir to discuss "speeding up" implementing the September deals. Kiir said in a speech on New Year's Eve the South was ready to withdraw its troops.

But diplomats remain skeptical of a quick breakthrough because both countries have a history of signing and then not implementing the agreements.

Since April's flare up, the worst violence since South Sudan seceded in 2011 after a 2005 peace deal ending the civil war, they have pulled back their armies from the almost 2,000 km (1,200 miles) border, much of which is disputed.

Both sides say such a buffer zone is necessary before oil from the landlocked South can flow through Sudanese territory. Juba shut down its entire output of 350,000 barrels a year ago after failing to agree on an export fee.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/01/04/258544.html?PHPSESSID=9gi4m5oj3ajaqe7u58tutgl215>

- **Sarkozy received '€50 million' from Qaddafi: report**

France's former President Nicolas Sarkozy took more than €50 million from the late Libyan leader, Muammar Qaddafi, a French judge has been told, a report on Thursday revealed.



Lebanese-born businessman, Ziad Takieddine told an investigative judge that he has “written proof” that transfers from Qaddafi and one of his sons to Sarkozy exceeded €50m in illegal payments, British newspaper the Independent reported.

The transfers helped prop up Sarkozy's first presidential campaign in 2006-7, which was “abundantly” financed by Tripoli and continued until just before the downfall of the Libyan regime, which was partly pushed by French and British airstrikes in 2011.

Sources close to Takieddine, according to the Independent, rebuffed the allegations as “outrageous” and “self-interested.”

Similar allegations arose in April 2012. Sarkozy's then campaign spokeswoman Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet has dismissed the latest report as "ridiculous" and a "clumsy diversion" orchestrated by Hollande's camp.

In an email to AFP news agency she said Sarkozy's 2007 campaign funds had been cleared by the Constitutional Council after the elections with no queries.

The 2006 document in Arabic, which website Mediapart said was signed by Qaddafi's foreign intelligence chief Mussa Kussa, referred to an "agreement in principle to support the campaign for the candidate for the presidential elections, Nicolas Sarkozy, for a sum equivalent to 50 million euros."

The left-wing investigative website made similar assertions on March 12, based on testimony by a former doctor of a French arms dealer alleged to have arranged the campaign donation, which Sarkozy slammed as "grotesque."

Takieddine, who is at the center of the latest claims, "has been a fixer for legal - and allegedly illegal - dealings between France and the Middle East for 20 years," reported the Independent.

But he himself is under formal investigation "for allegedly organizing and receiving illegal kick-backs on arms deals over two decades," the newspaper reported.

In comments made to newspaper Le Parisien, he said his allegations against Sarkozy were part of a proposed trade-off with the French judicial system. According to him, a deal would include an investigation into French politicians financed by Libya.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2013/01/03/258411.html?PHPSESSID=9gi4m5oj3ajaqe7u58tutgl2i5>

## 6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Nasrallah warns against spread of Syrian crisis into Lebanon**

Beirut, Jan 3, IRNA -- Lebanese Hezbollah's Secretary General Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah in a speech here on Thursday cautioned against the spread of the Syrian crisis into Lebanon.



Nasrallah urged the Lebanese government to maintain its dissociation policy over the Syrian crisis

and at the same time to back a political solution to end months-long conflict in Lebanon's neighbor.

He also warned against politicizing the case of the growing number of Syrians fleeing to Lebanon, saying Lebanon should deal with their plight on humanitarian grounds.

'I'm not asking the Lebanese government to abandon its disassociation policy ... but to develop Lebanon's political stance to put pressure and help those who support a political reconciliation and dialogue in Syria,' Nasrallah said in a televised speech.

Nasrallah also praised the government as well as his party for their stances towards the unrest in Syria, saying that "thanks to our stance and the stance of the current Lebanese government with regard to the Syrian crisis that fighting in Syria has been prevented from spreading to us,' he said.

His remarks came during a ceremony in the Bekaa Valley marking the Arbæen, the 40 days that follow the annual Ashoura commemorations over the martyrdom of Imam Hussein in 680 AD.

In his speech, Nasrallah also criticized the opposition March 14 alliance, noting that 'if the other team was in government, they would have involved Lebanon in fighting inside Lebanon and in Syria,' said Nasrallah.

Turning to the growing presence of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, which has provoked mixed responses in the country, Nasrallah insisted their case be dealt in a humanitarian manner and rejected the idea of closing the border to them.

'We should deal with the presence of the Syrian refugees in a purely humanitarian manner and avoid politicizing it,' he said.

'The Syrian families should be taken care of by the Lebanese government, whether they are with the opposition or the government or in between,' he added.

Nasrallah said Thursday that a political solution in Syria would help stop the bloodshed there and open the way for refugees in Lebanon to return home.

Noting that Lebanon is a country most vulnerable to the events in Syria, Nasrallah urged the government to appeal to various states and bodies to help ease the strains on the country.

The Hezbollah leader also touched on the case of the remaining nine Lebanese pilgrims being held in Syria and called on the government to negotiate directly with the kidnappers after it failed to secure their release using Turkish mediators.

"The way the government has dealt with this case is not satisfactory with all due respect to the efforts by officials ... but now is the time to directly negotiate with the kidnappers and designate a Lebanese official to do so," he said.

Eleven Shiite Lebanese pilgrims were kidnapped in Syria's Aleppo district on May 22 last year as they were making their way back by land from a pilgrimage in Iran. One of the hostages was released in late August and another in September.

The Hezbollah leader, who has vowed to defend Lebanon against any possible aggression by the Zionist regime, said his group was also ready to draft and put in place a strategy to protect the country's oil and gas wealth.

“We call on the state to put forward a national strategic plan and if they want to leave it up to us, we are ready to defend Lebanon’s fossil fuel resources,” he said.

“In order to protect the national oil resources, the resistance is ready to do whatever is asked of it,” Nasrallah said, describing the potential reserves as “a national, historic opportunity to lift Lebanon” from its socioeconomic crisis.

Last year, the Hezbollah chief warned Zionist regime against attempts aimed at plundering Lebanon’s offshore gas and oil reserves and threatened to target Israel’s oil installations in case Lebanon’s oil facilities were attacked.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Politic/Nasrallah-warns-against-spread-of-Syrian-crisis-into-Lebanon/80485215>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **'Senior al-Qaeda figure' killed in Yemen**

Security forces say Moqbel Ebad Al Zawbah and two companions killed by drone strike on their car in Al Bayda province.

Three al-Qaeda fighters, including "a senior figure", have been killed in south-central Yemen following a strike from an unmanned aircraft, security forces have told Al Jazeera.



Moqbel Ebad Al Zawbah and his two companions were killed on Thursday while in a car in the province of Al Bayda, the sources said.

The Reuters news agency said the attack in Redaa was the fifth by a pilotless plane in the space of 10 days in the impoverished country, where the US has stepped up drone strikes against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

AQAP exploited anti-government protests in 2011 to seize territory before being driven out by a military offensive last June.

"We have noticed a drone flying over for the past few days," a resident told Reuters.

He said the car in which the three men were killed was completely destroyed and their bodies were unrecognisable.

Yemeni officials who report the drone strikes will not be drawn on which nation is responsible.

But Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi spoke openly in favour of the drone strikes during a trip to the US in September.

Praised by the US ambassador in Sanaa as being more effective against al-Qaeda than his predecessor, Hadi was quoted as saying that he personally approved every attack.

Hadi has not commented on the most recent strikes.

Apparent miss

Last year, Washington stepped up attacks against AQAP, which is believed by Western governments to be the most active and dangerous wing of the global network, and has attempted a number of attacks against US targets.

Redaa was the scene in September of the killing of at least 10 civilians, including a 10-year-old girl, in an air strike that apparently missed its intended target, a car carrying fighters nearby, said tribal officials and residents.

A government official shortly afterwards said the attack was by a Yemeni aircraft, but some local people have said it was by a missile-firing drone.

In 2011, AQAP's offshoot, Ansar Al Sharia, seized a number of towns in the south that were retaken by the government in a US-backed offensive in June last year.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/01/201313155826924301.html>

In Bahrain, cameras are weapons

On Dec. 29, a photographer named Ahmed Humaidan was abducted by five plainclothes security officers in a Bahrain shopping mall parking lot.

According to reports from the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, five men in civilian clothing, who are believed to belong to the security forces, surrounded Humaidan and abducted him. After 19 hours, Humaidan was allowed to call his family for 20 seconds to inform them that he was alive, that he was at the Criminal Investigation Department and was being interrogated without the presence of his lawyer.

Since then, his parents' house has been invaded at least five times, and other relatives' houses four times, according to another report from EA Worldview.

The previous day, a DPA photographer Mazen Mahdi was arrested by police while covering a protest. Mazen tweeted:

“The reason for stopping me was not participating in anything but for taking pictures .. Apparently @moi\_bahrain thinks cameras weapons!”

Humaidan, who has won several international awards in photojournalism, is believed to have been targeted for his images of Bahraini protesters. But he's also the latest case in what has become a relentless power struggle between Bahrain's regime and the country's opposition.

For the past two years, Bahrain’s Sunni government has been confronted with a series of demonstrations by the majority Shia population, and there have been ongoing clashes between police and protesters as a result. The island nation rang in 2013 with more unrest. Here’s a look at what’s happened in December alone:

- A viral video showed a police officer slapping a man who was holding his toddler son twice when failed to produce the official papers that the officer demanded of him:
- Another rights activist was detained for documenting protests in the capital — on Twitter — with the charges claiming he was disseminating “false information.”
- The government stripped 31 opposition members of their nationality for what it said were security reasons, according to RT.
- The Financial Times reported that one village was raided by police more than 300 times, with some houses raided several times a night.
- Bahraini police fired tear gas and stun bombs to break up protests in Shiite-populated villages around the capital, Manama.

Bahrain’s courts do seem to be punishing those responsible for some of the more high-profile instances of brutality, but human rights activists say the sentences aren’t harsh enough.

Following the scandal caused by this video, Bahrain’s Interior Ministry announced it had arrested the police officer and tried him in a military court. Two police officers were also sentenced on Dec. 31 to seven years in prison for beating a Shiite opposition activist to death during last year’s crackdown on protesters.

Still, there’s a sense among police that those documenting the protests are part of a conspiracy. As Mohamed Hassan pointed out in a post for Global Voices, Bahrain’s police chief, Tariq al-

Hassan, took to Twitter to suggest that the video evidence of police brutality was somehow faked:

Attempts to defame the ministry of interior and its staff is a part of a fierce war by known and exposed persons and organizations after their previous plans have failed.

They setup ambushes for policemen based on scenarios prepared by media professionals working in known media channels in other countries and then filmed and released when needed. These traitorous fakers publish those scenes and exaggerate them as they are instructed and the way that fits the goals of those countries and theirs.

Bahrain residents joined in the 2011 Arab Spring protests, but government troops there cracked down before they were able to topple the regime, with help from neighboring Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Protests have been ongoing ever since, flaring up periodically and grabbing headlines whenever a particularly egregious incident takes place (or whenever, you know, Kim Kardashian shows up.)

Incidents like the arrests of photographers over the past few weeks show just how tense the atmosphere there still is, as not even those covering the demonstrations are safe.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/01/03/in-bahrain-cameras-are-weapons/>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **US drone kills senior Pakistan tribal leader**

Commander Mullah Nazir, known to have ties to Afghan Taliban, among at least nine fighters killed in separate strikes.

Two US drone strikes in the Pakistan tribal regions bordering Afghanistan have killed at least nine people, including a senior tribal leader who was known to have ties to the Afghan Taliban, Pakistani intelligence officials have said.

Six people, including Taliban-linked commander Mullah Nazir, who also had a truce with Pakistan's military, were killed in the strike in South Waziristan and three others were killed in the second strike in the North, officials said on Thursday.

According to the officials, the US drone fired two missiles at Nazir's home in the Sar Kanda area of Birmil in Pakistan's northwestern tribal district of South Waziristan.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

"The attack by a US drone late last night targeted a house in the An-goor Adda area in South Waziristan on the Afghan border," Al Jazeera's Kamal Hyder reported.

"Mullah Nazir was among those killed. The strike happened at a time when the US wants to talk with the Taliban... this is a major setback."

Haqqani links

Nazir reached a peace deal with Islamabad in 2007 and had testy relations with the Pakistani Taliban, who are fighting a domestic insurgency.

His death may have significance on US-led efforts to hold at bay an 11-year insurgency in neighbouring Afghanistan, where he opposed the presence of US and NATO troops since foreign troops brought down the Taliban regime in 2001.

Nazir was also understood to be close to the al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network, a faction of the Afghan Taliban blamed for some of the most high-profile attacks in Afghanistan and the capital Kabul in recent years.

Two of his influential deputies, Atta Ullah and Rafey Khan, were among those killed, the official added, and Nazir's fighters have been targeted by US drone strikes in the past.

#### Civilian casualties

Another US drone fired two missiles at a vehicle carrying fighters in northwest Pakistan, killing at least three people near the Afghan border, local security officials said.

The missiles struck the vehicle in Mubarak Shahi village, 20km east of Miranshah, the main town in North Waziristan tribal district, a stronghold of Taliban and al-Qaeda-linked fighters.

"There has been no confirmation of the exact target in the northern Waziristan strike... but that region has received the highest intensity of strikes," Hyder reported.

Another security official in the northwestern city of Peshawar confirmed the attack and casualties.

Both officials said the identity of those killed was not yet known.

The covert US drone strikes are publicly criticised by the Pakistani government as a violation of sovereignty but American officials believe they are a vital weapon in the war against insurgency in the country.

In September, a report commissioned by legal lobby group, Reprieve, estimated that between 474 and 881 civilians were among 2,562 to 3,325 people killed by drones in Pakistan between June 2004 and September 2012.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/01/2013135203260995.html>



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