



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Maliki: Constitution, dialogue to resolve political crises**

Baghdad, Jan 8 (AIN) -The Iraqi Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki called to resolve the current political crisis through the constitution and dialogue.

In a press conference held jointly with head of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, Ammar al-Hakim, after meeting him, Maliki said "The radical solutions for the crisis need concerted efforts and real intention to address them within the constitutional framework and according to the principles of the fruitful dialogue."

He continued saying that "The launch of demonstrations and protests is a legitimate right guaranteed by the Iraqi constitution, and the Government has to listen to the demonstrators' demands if they remain within the law and the constitution, but at the same time the demands should not be exploited by foreign agendas or to be turned into civil disobedience which disturbs the performance of the state departments."

"Our meeting with Hakim is an extension to previous consensus and meetings to reach strategic understanding and agreement between both of our blocs," he added.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26268:maliki-political-crises-cannot-be-resolved-but-through-constitution-dialogue-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26268:maliki-political-crises-cannot-be-resolved-but-through-constitution-dialogue-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **Wataneyon bloc demands [that Anbar people] continue demonstrations until [they achieve] their demands**

Shafaq News, Jan 8 / Wataneyon ( patriots ) bloc called on Tuesday, the people of Anbar to continue demonstrations until achieving their demands , calling on the security services not to prevent peaceful demonstrators in the provinces that are witnessing demonstrations.

The MP of the bloc, Ahmed al-Jubouri said in a press conference held in the parliament in the presence of a number of members of his bloc and attended by "Shafaq News" that "what the protesters are demanding for are their rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law to demonstrate peacefully and not to violate public institutions."

"The United States and other regional countries are seeking to divide Iraq," and urged "the political blocs to unite the position in order to implement the legitimate and legal demands of the demonstrators especially in the employment balance in all the provinces."

Jubouri explained that "Iraq and throughout the past period did not submit a proposal for a general amnesty, knowing that most of the detainees are its supporters."

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/news/4658-wataneyon-bloc-demands-anbar-people-to-continue-demonstrations-until-achieving-their-demands.html>

- **Police permit demonstrators to protest conditionally in Mosul**

NINEWA, Jan 8/ Aswat al-Iraq: Federal police permitted Mosul demonstrators to enter the sit-in square, but with conditions, if the protestors violated security regulations or raising placards or picture.

Commander of the Federal Police in Ninewa Staff General Mehdi al-Gharawi told Aswat al-Iraq that "negotiations were held with the Provincial Council and sit-in conditions were laid out, so the square was re-opened before the protestors".

"This does not mean that opening the square for ever to conduct sit-ins, but should be having permits from Interior Ministry", he elaborated.

One of the pre-conditions is not raising the previous Iraq flag, using denominational slogans and pictures that will incite other components.

Federal police closed Ahrar sit-in square today and prevented the protesters, conditioning the permit to demonstrate should be issued by the Interior Ministry, not the province itself.

Local police forces undertook security affairs of Ahrar sit-in square under the control of the Federal Police, while the army forces withdrew from the scene.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%280mahhy55kocwtf55uhnrk45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=152083&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%280mahhy55kocwtf55uhnrk45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=152083&l=1)

- **"Bad intentions" for closing Iraqi-Jordan Trebeil border [crossing], MP**

BAGHDAD, Jan 8/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqiya Bloc MP described the closure of Trebeil border vent with Jordan includes "bad intentions aiming at covering legitimate Anbar protestors' demands".

MP Waleed Aboud al-Muhamadi, in a statement today, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, that the closure of the border vent proves that "the demonstrators are more democratic than the government, because they did not fully close the highway".

"There is another services road that could be used for trucks, but the government decided the closure, thus taking no consideration to the flow of goods", he elaborated.

Earlier, Chairman of Anbar Provincial Council Saadoun Ubaid al-Sha'lan denied to Aswat al-Iraq the closure of Trebeil border vent.

Iraqiya semi-official TV reported, in a breaking news, this morning, that the ministry of defence announced the closure due to the security situation in Anbar province and the increasing volumes of sit-ins.

[http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%280mahhy55kocwtf55uhnnrk45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=152087&l=1](http://en.aswatiliraq.info/%28S%280mahhy55kocwtf55uhnnrk45%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=152087&l=1)

- **Arab League appreciates Iraq's donation for Palestinian Detainees' Fund**

Baghdad, Jan 8 (AIN) –The Arab League renewed its appreciation for Iraq's donation for the Fund of the Palestinian and Arab Detainees' in Israeli detentions.

The AL called to activate the resolutions of Baghdad Arab Summit.

An Exceptional meeting of AL was held on Tuesday were the Representatives of Lebanon headed the meeting that was attended by the Ambassador of Iraq at the AL and Palestinian Minister of Detainees.

They stressed taking the required procedures to protect the Palestinian detainees in the Israeli detentions

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26271](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26271)

- **Perpetrator of Diyala explosion captured**

Diyala, Jan 8 (AIN) -11 civilians were killed and injured when a car bomb detonated in Khan Bani Saad district to the southwest of Diyala province.

Director of Diyala Police told All Iraq News Agency (AIN) on Tuesday "The number of victims of the car bomb explosion that took place this afternoon in Khan Bani Saad district hit three deaths and eight injured mostly civilians."

"The police managed to capture the bombing perpetrator who detonated the car bomb by remote control," he added.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=26250](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26250)

- **Kurdistan move to export crude 'still illegal'**

Any move by Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region to export oil without central government approval is still illegal and would make reaching a deal on delayed oil payments more difficult, senior Iraqi oil officials said on Tuesday.

"If the Kurdistan Regional Government insists to move in the wrong direction, even by bartering crude without legal approval, this will worsen the situation and make it more difficult to reach an agreement," one senior Iraqi oil official said.

No date has been set for talks between the central government and the Kurdish authorities to end their disagreement over Kurdistan exports and payments to foreign companies working in the autonomous region in northern Iraq. – Reuters

[http://www.tradearabia.com/news/OGN\\_228589.html](http://www.tradearabia.com/news/OGN_228589.html)

- **Iraqi crude oil exports fell in December (UPI)**

BAGHDAD, Jan. 8 (UPI) -- Iraqi oil exports fell from a post-1990 record in November to around 2.3 million barrels per day for December, government records indicate.

Figures obtained by the Platts reporting service from Iraq's State Oil Marketing Organization indicate that Iraqi crude oil exports declined 272,000 bpd from November's record to 2.35 million bpd in December.

December exports from Iraq's southern ports declined 172,000 bpd to 2.02 million bpd. Rough weather in the Persian Gulf region left some storage units idle, limiting storage capacity for southern oil fields, reports Platts.

Export from northern production areas in the Kurdish region of Iraq fell from the November level of 425,000 bpd to settle at 325,000 bpd for December. Platts attributed the decline in exports to lower supplies reaching a northern pipeline system.

Last month, Kurdish Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani said at a regional oil and natural gas conference that production from the semiautonomous northern region should add at least \$8 billion to the Iraqi treasury. In 2013, he said, the region should export, on average, 250,000 barrels of oil per day.

[http://www.upi.com/Business\\_News/Energy-Resources/2013/01/08/Iraqi-crude-oil-exports-fell-in-December/UPI-83891357653858/](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Energy-Resources/2013/01/08/Iraqi-crude-oil-exports-fell-in-December/UPI-83891357653858/)

- **Iraqi Minister of Municipalities: Sewage projects delayed due to administrative corruption**

Ministry of Municipalities discussed in its conference held on Monday January 7, the reasons for the delay in sewage projects in Iraq and looked for possible alternatives to avoid a possible flood resulting from the rain. Municipality Minister Adel Muhawdar ascribed the delay in sewage projects' execution to administrative corruption in addition to the incompetence of executing companies in accomplishing such projects.

“Some projects are delayed. This deviation and postponement have many causes that can't be resumed in one and they include administrative corruption, absence of decent follow-up and in the first place, incompetence and incapacity of commissioned companies to execute such strategic projects that should be commissioned to giant and specialized ones”, said Minister of Municipalities and Labor, Adel Muhawdar.

Sewage directorate in the Ministry confirmed that there are instantaneous solutions that will be implemented in order to prevent a probable crisis or until the full execution of sewage projects.

“Some midterm projects remained in the execution phase for 3 years. We do not accept that such a project remains unfinished for 3 years. We have asked the engineer’s directorate to divide them into zone and as soon as a region’s network is finished, the municipality can proceed to paving and building sidewalks”, said the general director of the Ministry’s sewage authority, Fouad Khoudayr.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/69563/iraqi-minister-of-municipalities-sewage-projects-d/en>

- **Iraqis awarded \$5m over Abu Ghraib abuse**

Settlement marks first successful effort by lawyers for former prisoners who were abused between 2003 and 2007.

A US defence contractor whose subsidiary was accused of conspiring to torture detainees at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq has paid \$5.28m to 71 former inmates held there between 2003 and 2007.



Tuesday’s settlement marks the first successful effort by lawyers for former prisoners at Abu Ghraib and other US-run detention centres to collect money from a US defence contractor in lawsuits alleging torture.

Another contractor, CACI, is expected to go to trial over similar allegations this summer.

The payments were disclosed in a document that Engility Holdings Inc filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission two months ago but which has gone essentially unnoticed.

On Tuesday, a lawyer for the ex-detainees, Baher Azmy, said that each of the 71 Iraqis received a portion of the settlement.

Azmy declined to say how the money was distributed among them. He said there was an agreement to keep details of the settlement confidential.

“Private military contractors played a serious but often under-reported role in the worst abuses at Abu Ghraib,” said Azmy, the legal director at the Center for Constitutional Rights.

“We are pleased that this settlement provides some accountability for one of those contractors and offers some measure of justice for the victims.”

Eric Ruff, Engility's director of corporate communications, said the company does not comment on matters involving litigation.

'Criminal conduct'

The ex-detainees filed the lawsuit in federal court in Greenbelt, Maryland, in 2008.

L-3 Services "permitted scores of its employees to participate in torturing and abusing prisoners over an extended period of time throughout Iraq", the lawsuit stated.

The company "willfully failed to report L-3 employees' repeated assaults and other criminal conduct by its employees to the United States or Iraq authorities".

The defendant in the lawsuit, L-3 Services Inc, now an Engility subsidiary, provided translators to the US military in Iraq.

In its defence four years ago against the lawsuit, L-3 Services said lawyers for the Iraqis alleged that there were no facts to support the conspiracy accusation.

Sixty-eight of the Iraqis "do not even attempt to allege the identity of their alleged abuser" and two others provide only "vague assertions", the company said then.

A military investigation in 2004 identified 44 alleged incidents of detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib.

No employee from L-3 Services was charged with a crime in investigations by the US Justice Department. Nor did the US military stop the company from working for the government.

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal erupted during President George W Bush's re-election campaign in 2004 when graphic photographs taken by soldiers at the scene were leaked to the news media.

They showed naked inmates piled on top of each other in a prison cell block, inmates handcuffed to their cell bars and hooded and wired for electric shock, among other shocking scenes.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/01/2013193300675421.html>

## 2. IRAN

- **Iran to publicize details of foiled attempts to kill Iranian scientists: Minister**

Iran's Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi says the Islamic Republic will soon publicize details of foiled attempts to assassinate the country's nuclear scientists.



“Good news will soon be publicized on thwarting assassination plots against some of the nuclear scientists of our country,” Moslehi told reporters on Wednesday.

He said that Iran has taken very good measures and delivered a heavy blow to the elements and terrorist groups that sought to target Iranian nuclear scientists.

The Iranian intelligence minister added that the Islamic Republic has continued its intelligence operations and managed to identify and foil attempts made by the terrorist groups to carry out assassinations.

Moslehi said further details will be announced in the future.

Since 2009, five Iranian nuclear scientists have become the target of terrorist attacks, which have killed four of them.

In the latest series of attacks, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan was assassinated in January 2012 after an unknown motorcyclist attached a magnet bomb to his car near Allameh Tabatabaei University in Tehran.

Iran condemns the United States and Israel for the assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists.

Washington, Tel Aviv and their allies accuse Iran of pursuing a military nuclear program.

Iran refutes the allegations and argues that as a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it is entitled to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/09/282618/iran-to-detail-plots-against-nscientists/>

- **Iran's foreign minister underlines relations with African countries**

Iran's Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has stressed the Islamic Republic's foreign policy to expand relations and cooperation with African countries.

"It is the will of the high-ranking officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran to expand relations with Africa," Salehi said in a meeting with Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister Djibril Bassole on Tuesday night.

He said Iran and Africa can cooperate well in different sectors, given the cultural affinity between the two countries as well as Iran's capabilities and experience.



He called for the exchange of delegations between Tehran and Ouagadougou in order

to identify further capacities for cooperation in different areas, including economy, trade, agriculture, industry and hygiene.

Salehi also officially invited his counterpart to visit Iran.

Bassole, for his part, hoped that Salehi's visit would pave the way for the further development of bilateral ties.

He lauded Iran's progress in different areas and expressed his country's readiness to cooperate with Iran and use Tehran's experience in the areas of agriculture and hygiene.

The two officials also discussed regional and international developments and the two countries' role in resolving challenges in their regions.

In a separate meeting, Salehi also met with Burkina Faso's Parliament Speaker Vatar Songalou Apolinz, where he called for the further expansion of the ties between the two countries in economic, trade, agricultural, cultural, scientific and technical fields.

He described the political relations between the two countries as good and stressed the importance of mutual consultations and cooperation for the restoration of global peace, stability and security. Salehi also invited Apolinz to visit Tehran on behalf of Iran's Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani.

The African official also said that Salehi's visit could help enhance the relations and underlined the need to develop mutual ties between the two countries.

Salehi began his tour of Africa on Saturday. He arrived in Burkina Faso on Tuesday, and is scheduled to leave for Egypt on Wednesday.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/09/282569/iran-stresses-ties-with-african-states/>

### 3. SYRIA

- **Militants in Syria release 48 abducted Iranian pilgrims**

Foreign-backed militants in Syria have released the 48 Iranian pilgrims who had been abducted near the capital city of Damascus, Press TV reports.



The abductees were set free in a swap deal between the Syrian government and the armed militants.

An undisclosed number of Turkish nationals arrested by Syrian security forces in recent months were among those released by Damascus in the swap deal.

On August 4, 2012, 48 Iranian pilgrims, who were traveling on a bus from Damascus International Airport to the shrine of Hazrat Zainab (AS) on the outskirts of the Syrian capital, were abducted by the militants.

In a video aired by the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television network, the militants threatened to kill all the Iranian abductees if the Syrian government did not release the captured militants and if it did not stop operations against the armed groups in the country within 48 hours. The threat, however, was never carried out.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of security forces, have been killed in the turmoil.

The Syrian government says the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the militants are foreign nationals.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/09/282601/syria-militants-free-48-iranian-pilgrims/>

- **Assad's plan based on Syria's realities:  
Iran lawmaker**

An Iranian lawmaker says the plan proposed by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to resolve the country's crisis is based on the current realities of the Arab state.



Seyyed Hossein Naqavi-Hosseini said on Wednesday that foreign countries are supporting terrorists in Syria and providing them with weapons, while the people are standing by their country.

“This crisis will result in the massacre of the people,” said the spokesman for the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

“Terrorists will never overcome the Syrian people and government,” Naqavi-Hosseini noted, saying that Assad has considered the reality that the ongoing war in Syria is between foreign powers on the one side and the Syrian people and government on the other.

In a key speech on Sunday, Assad said his government is always ready to hold talks with the opposition and political parties and will call for a “comprehensive national dialog” after foreign parties end their support for the militants and the terrorist activities end in the country.

Syria has been the scene of unrest since early 2011 and has witnessed the deaths of many people, including large numbers of army and security personnel in the violence.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/09/282599/assad-plan-based-on-syria-realities/>

- **Iran supports Assad's plan to settle Syria crisis: First vice president**

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi has underlined the Islamic Republic's support for a plan offered by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to settle the unrest in the Arab country.



In a key speech on Sunday, Assad called for an end to the terrorist operations inside Syria and urged "concerned states and parties" to stop funding, arming and harboring militants.

He said his government is always ready to hold talks with the opposition and political parties and will call for a “comprehensive national dialog” after foreign parties end their support for the

militants and the terrorist activities cease in the country. The Syrian leader also proposed the drafting of a new constitution.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran supports this stance and considers it a significant step toward the establishment of stability and security in Syria,” Rahimi said in a telephone conversation with Syrian Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi on Tuesday.

Terrorists and foreign countries should know that the Syrian nation wants peace and reforms and does not brook foreign interference in the country, Rahimi added.

The Syrian premier, for his part, praised Iran’s support for the Syrian nation, and added that the Syrian people stand firmly against enemies and do not allow any foreign interference in their country.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011. Many people, including large numbers of army and security personnel, have been killed in the turmoil.

The Syrian government says the chaos is being orchestrated from outside the country, and there are reports that a very large number of the militants are foreign nationals.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/01/09/282575/iran-supports-assads-plan-for-syria/>

#### 4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Looking Obamaesque, Netanyahu surveys storm management**

Though the prime minister is not facing as tough an electoral challenge as Obama did,



M.ORG.TR

nor does storm approach power of Hurricane Sandy, Netanyahu makes sure to meet with police, emergency services heads.

Seemingly taking a page out of US President Barack Obama's playbook, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu went to the Israel police's traffic control center at Bet Dagan on Wednesday, radiating a sense that he is on top of the situation as storms continue to pummel the country.

When Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey and New York in late October, just a week before the US elections, Obama went to the stricken areas looking concerned, presidential, and effectively managing the crisis, something that stemmed Republican candidate Mitt Romney's momentum and helped Obama win a second term.

Netanyahu is not facing in two weeks time nearly as tough an electoral challenge as Obama did, and the storm that is currently rocking Israel is not nearly as powerful as Hurricane Sandy was, yet Netanyahu made sure to go to Beit Dagan and – with cameras whirling – hold a meeting with the country's police top brass and heads of the other emergency services.

"We waited many years for this rain, and I hope it remains for a blessing, and will not cause fatalities," he said, calling on the public to act responsibly and listen to the police's directives.

Netanyahu thanked the public for its "patience," saying they understand that after the traffic jams disappear, "we will remain with full water reservoirs which we need."

The prime minister said he convened the meeting to receive a briefing on the situation, as well as to thank all those working in the inclement weather to ensure that services were provided and those in need received assistance. "The system is working well," he said.

Netanyahu said he already directed his director general to look into compensation payments for people facing significant damage and financial loss from the storm.

"A month after Operation Pillar of Defense, the emergency services are proving again to the home front that there is someone to rely on," Netanyahu said.

<http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=298949>

- **IDF nabs 2 terror cells linked to West Bank rioting**

Security forces arrested in November members of both terror cells allegedly behind a series of violent disturbances in the West Bank.



Security forces uncovered two terror cells that are allegedly behind a series of violent disturbances in the West Bank in recent weeks.

The arrests were made in November, the Shin Bet [Israel Security Agency] said on Wednesday.

The first series of arrests targeted suspects from the village of Husan and the Bethlehem area, who are suspected of hurling rocks at an Israeli vehicle on Route 375, which resulted in an Israeli woman, Ziyona Kala, being seriously injured.

Kala, wife of the famous singer Itzik Kala, was in intensive care for weeks after the attack, before regaining consciousness last month.

Her husband told Channel 2 in December that when he first saw her in the hospital, "I didn't believe she would live. Without a doubt, there was a moment I fell apart. I don't remember when I cried like that," he said. Since then, Ziyona Kala has made good progress in her recovery.

"During questioning by the Shin Bet, the suspects – some of them minors – confessed to the act, and to throwing rocks at other vehicles that travelled along the road at the time," the Shin Bet said.

The intelligence agency named Abd Aluhab Hamamra, 22, as the man who threw the rock that caused the injury. He will be charged in the coming days at the Military Court of Judea. Four additional suspects – three of them minors – will be charged for taking part in the attack.

In another investigation, a group of Palestinians from Kafr Bita, near Nablus, are under arrest for throwing rocks from a moving vehicle, and for attempting to carry out shooting attacks using a homemade firearm in the northern West Bank.

The Shin Bet said that the suspects confessed to being behind violent disturbances and attempted shooting attacks. One of the suspects – a minor – acted as a driver during the rock throwing, the Shin Bet added. A second suspect, Hamza Abd Salah Khader, 22, a member of the Fatah Tanzim group, confessed to being head of the cell, and to opening fire on Israeli targets.

The suspects will be charged in the coming days in the Samaria Military Court.

"We view rock throwing incidents as grave incidents," the Shin Bet said, "especially rock throwing from a moving vehicle, which creates a significant danger.

The Shin Bet said similar attacks in the past resulted in the murders of Asher Palmer and his baby son, Yehonatan, in September 2011, when rocks were thrown at their vehicle from another moving vehicle near Hebron.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=298945>

- **Abbas, Mashaal to meet in Cairo for talks**



Morsi to oversee Palestinian reconciliation talks; Hamas to discuss cease-fire in Gaza with Egyptian officials.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal are expected to meet in Cairo on Wednesday to discuss ending the dispute between Fatah and Hamas.

The meeting will be held in the presence of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and senior representatives of Fatah and Hamas.

Hamas and Fatah officials said that the talks would focus on ways to implement previous reconciliation accords reached between the two movements, first and foremost the formation of a Palestinian unity government and holding long overdue presidential and parliamentary elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Following the Abbas- Mashaal summit, Fatah and Hamas officials will hold separate talks in Cairo to pursue efforts to end the dispute, the officials said.

The Hamas delegation is also scheduled to hold talks with Egyptian intelligence officials to discuss ways to solidify the current cease-fire in the Gaza Strip.

Abbas was also scheduled to meet Tuesday night with US envoy David Hale in Jordan to discuss the possibility of resuming peace talks between the PA and Israel.

A PA official in Ramallah said Abbas was planning to reiterate his call to the US to exert pressure on Israel to stop settlement construction in order to pave the way for the resumption of the peace process.

Abbas will also discuss with the US envoy the severe financial crisis facing the PA in wake of the UN General Assembly vote in favor of upgrading the Palestinians' status to non-member observer state.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=298899>

- **Ex-Shin Bet head: Stalled talks could spark intifada**

Israel faces the prospect of a new Palestinian uprising because of despair over the gridlock in peacemaking, former Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) chief Ya'acov Peri said on Tuesday.



Peri, running for Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid party in the January 22 elections, told Reuters in an interview that the next government must make peace negotiations with the Palestinians its foreign policy priority.

"Israel must do everything to come back to the negotiating table and find a compromise," he said, criticizing other leaders from across the political spectrum for playing down the issue.

The IDF has reported growing violence across the West Bank in recent weeks, prompting warnings of a possible intifada after years of relative calm.

"Are we on the edge of a third intifada? It is a real possibility because of the amount of despair coupled with the (political) stalemate," said Peri, who headed the Shin Bet from 1988 to 1994 - a time that coincided with the first intifada.

Shin Bet is responsible for overseeing intelligence gathering in the Palestinian Territories and Peri warned that fundamentalist Islamist groups hostile to Israel would seize the initiative if there was no peace initiative.

He added that another Palestinian revolt need not be violent, but could evolve into a mass protest movement.

Peri said he was certain a deal could still be reached with the Palestinians.

"It is doable, but not easy. I wouldn't say there is hatred, but a complete lack of faith. I think 50 or 60 percent of the issues are already agreed upon," he said.

The Yesh Atid candidate criticized Labor leader Shelly Yacimovich for failing to address the peace process in the lead-up to the election.

"The extreme right refuses to deal with the diplomatic issues at all and is hiding its head in the sand. Yacimovich is aiding and abetting the right without presenting the alternative," said Peri.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=298900>

## 5. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Egypt's president to meet Palestinian rivals on unity**

CAIRO/GAZA — Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy plans to meet the leaders of Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah on Wednesday in a renewed effort to help them heal their five-year-old feud, Palestinian and Egyptian officials said.



But there was no confirmation President Mahmoud Abbas of the secular Fatah group and Khaled Meshaal of the Islamist Hamas movement would meet face to face, and a unity pact reached in Cairo last year has yet to be implemented.

The officials said Morsy would meet separately with Abbas and Meshaal to discuss the stalled reconciliation deal, and Egyptian mediators hoped to coax them into the same room.

Abbas is reluctant to any format which would imply giving the Hamas leader a status equivalent to his own.

Morsy, grappling with political and economic difficulties at home, helped broker a ceasefire deal that ended a brief war in November between Israel and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip.

Leaders of the two groups have been deadlocked over the unity agreement and have traded blame over continued arrests among members in the West Bank, where Abbas holds sway, and in Gaza, which Hamas wrested from Abbas's control in 2007.

On Tuesday, a Hamas court sentenced a senior Fatah armed activist, Zaki al-Sakani, to 15 years in prison for possession of arms, according to Hamas security sources. A Fatah official described the verdict as a blow to reconciliation.

Thaw in relations

The Palestinian rivals have drawn closer since Israel's assault on Gaza in November, in which Hamas claimed victory, and a diplomatic win by Abbas the same month in which the United Nations voted to recognize Palestine as a "non-member state."

Supporters of the two factions were allowed to hold anniversary rallies in Gaza and the West Bank for the first time since their split, though the celebrations produced no concrete signs of how reconciliation might be implemented.

Last year's Egyptian-drafted agreement called on both sides to form a unity government that would oversee an election and reform the Abbas-led Palestine Liberation Organization to include Hamas and the less influential Islamic Jihad group.

Abbas says Hamas is obstructing election registration in Gaza, while Meshaal says the pact needs to be implemented as a whole, with Hamas prisoners in West Bank jails released.

A senior Hamas official in Gaza accused Abbas of dragging his feet on reconciliation and slowing its pace because he was still hoping for a renewal of stalled peace talks with Israel.

"Our information showed that President Abbas would head towards reviving negotiations with the occupation (Israel) when the election in Israel is finished," Salah al-Bardaweel said in a statement.

Israel will hold a parliamentary election on 22 January.

Israel has criticized Palestinian unity efforts, fearing grassroots support for Hamas, deemed a terrorist group by the Jewish state and Western governments, could overwhelm Abbas's administration, which has long renounced violence against Israel.

Hani Habib, a political analyst in Gaza, said the Cairo talks, like previous meetings, had little chance of success.

"The talks today were meant to show something regarding reconciliation is happening but there will be nothing new," he said. "Each side has been unable to twist the other's arm and therefore each is happy with the status quo.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-s-president-meet-palestinian-rivals-unity>

- **Officials: Egypt parliamentary election seen in April**

Egypt, battered by political turmoil and an economic crisis that has sent the local currency tumbling, will hold a parliamentary election in April, officials said on Wednesday.



Under Egypt's new constitution approved by a referendum last month, President Mohamed Morsy must set an election date within 60 days of when he signed the document into law on 26 December.

"The vote for parliament will take place in April," said an official at the president's office, who asked not to be named. "The exact date for the vote has not been fixed yet and the president will announce it no later than 25 February."

The Islamist-led government is trying to clinch a US\$4.8 billion loan from the IMF to ease economic strains worsened by a turbulent political transition since a popular uprising toppled President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

Unrest over the Constitution rammed through by Morsy late last year prompted the Islamist president to withdraw tax rises seen as part of a program provisionally agreed with the International Monetary Fund.

The IMF is expected to send a technical team back to Cairo within two to three weeks to discuss the loan, which is vital to restoring a measure of confidence in the economy and in the Egyptian pound, which fell to a new low at a Central Bank auction of US dollars on Wednesday.

The pound has lost 5 percent of its dollar value since the Central Bank adopted a new system of dollar sales on 30 December designed to stem the currency's fall. The pound has dropped 10.7 percent since Mubarak's overthrow nearly two years ago.

Qatar threw Egypt a financial lifeline on Tuesday, saying it had lent the country another \$2 billion and given it an extra \$500 million outright to help control the currency crisis, which has drained foreign reserves to a critical level.

Egypt has not had a lower house of Parliament since the Supreme Constitutional Court dissolved the Islamist-dominated body in June. Legislative power now rests with the Shura Council.

"With a new Parliament in place, Egypt would have completed its transition with an elected president, a Constitution and a Parliament," said another official at the president's office.

The Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, which propelled Morsy to power in a June election, was the biggest bloc in the previous Parliament.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/officials-egypt-parliamentary-election-seen-april>

- **Egypt gets second installment of \$1 bln loan**

The General Petroleum Authority on Wednesday signed an agreement with a member of the Islamic Development Bank Group to receive a US\$265 million loan under an Islamic murabaha arrangement.



A murabaha is a non-interest-bearing loan.

A statement issued by the Cabinet on Wednesday said that the installment was the second of a loan the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation offered to Egypt in accordance with a framework agreement signed in July amounting to \$1 billion.

Finance Minister Morsy Hegazy said the government is negotiating with the Islamic Development Bank to get further assistance for infrastructure projects, according to the statement.

Meanwhile, Waleed al-Wohaib, CEO for the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation, said in the government-issued statement that the institution trusts the Egyptian economy and the government's ability to meet its obligations.

He added that the corporation has signed two framework agreements with Egypt, the first of which was signed on 8 March and offered \$2.2 billion in financing for the GPA and the Supply Commodities Authority.

The second framework agreement of \$1 billion was signed on 1 July to finance the import of petroleum products and wheat and other foodstuffs.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-gets-second-installment-1-bln-loan>

## 6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Parliament meetings will go nowhere**

The approval expressed by March 14 Christians for the Orthodox Gathering's electoral law is intended to please the Christian electorate and the Maronite Church, according to a member of the Bkirki Committee on election law and the parliamentary subcommittee on the same topic.



The member adds that the Lebanese Forces and Kataeb know that Bkirki and the Maronite Order believe that the Orthodox draft, which allows Christians to elect their own MPs, is the only way to correct what they see as poor Christian representation in Parliament.

The member says that other options, including the 1960 electoral law – even if amended – will not eliminate the perceived problem.

A former head of the Maronite Order told The Daily Star that a failure to adopt the Orthodox draft could trigger Christian parties to make new demands on the system. These include the implementation of the Taif Agreement, increasing the powers of the presidency, and Christian

control of senior administrative posts they once held. Christians might even suggest amending the Taif Accord itself.

Sources say that the meetings of Parliament's subcommittee this week will go nowhere and that this will be the case until contacts outside Parliament reach an agreement, which will then be referred to the committee so it can prepare it for ratification.

The sources add that the Orthodox law will not pass even if all Shiite and Christian parties approve it, because of opposition from Sunnis. The head of the Future parliamentary bloc, Fouad Siniora, expressed this rejection Monday night on MTV.

Druze are also against the draft, and Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt recently said adopting any electoral law requires wide agreement similar to that needed for ratifying the Constitution.

The sources say that Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea's call for Parliament's General Assembly to choose from among the draft laws may not come to fruition, as all parties must agree for Speaker Nabih Berri to convene such a session.

Political sources say that even without agreement on a new law, if there is international pressure for timely elections then the 1960 law could be used with minor amendments. This is despite the fact that all parties have come out against the law.

The sources add that only the Shiite political parties can guarantee that they will maintain the same share of Parliament after the vote. Polls in Kesrouan, for example, suggest that Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun's hold is not as strong there as it was in 2009 and that he may lose a seat.

His situation in Metn and Ashrafieh is no better.

As for the Future bloc, sources say the rising popularity of Al-Jamaa al-Islamiya in Akkar and Dinnieh may encourage them to ask for an additional seat on Future lists. Prime Minister Najib Mikati could make gains in Tripoli and the north, because of his defense of Islamist movements.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jan-09/201432-parliament-meetings-will-go-nowhere.ashx#ixzz2HUYgCzBq>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **UAE interrogating women's organization members over alleged coup plot**

Emirati authorities began Wednesday interrogating members of a women's organization whom they accuse of trying to seize power.

Emirati news agency WAM quoted Public Prosecutor Saeed Kebeish as saying that the prosecution is investigating leading members of a women's group, which they suspect may be part of a larger organization allegedly plotting to overthrow the government.



The prosecution stressed that the female suspects were questioned "considering the principles of Sharia in treating women, as well as privacy and traditions of the Emirati society, without violating justice and equality between persons in regards to law, which doesn't differentiate between people."

Emirati authorities announced in July that they had arrested members of an outlawed organization, which included 60 Emirati members. There were no news reports at the time that female members were among those arrested.

The suspects allegedly testified that they belonged to a secret organization that had formed a military wing to take over power in the UAE and form an Islamist government.

At the beginning of January, Emirati authorities also announced they had arrested 11 Egyptians who were allegedly members of a Muslim Brotherhood cell in the UAE.

The cases are believed to be part of a wider crackdown by Emirati authorities on Islamist groups.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/uae-interrogating-women-s-organization-members-over-alleged-coup-plot>

- **UAE militant cell linked to Yemen's Al-Qaeda: police chief**

DUBAI: A suspected Islamist militant cell detained in the United Arab Emirates had links to Al-Qaeda, including its prominent Yemen-based wing, Dubai's police chief said in an interview published on Wednesday.



Dahi Khalfan also said the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood and Shiite Iran were among the main security threats to Gulf Arab states because they wanted to export revolution to the region.

The United Arab Emirates, a major oil producer that has supported Western counter-terrorism efforts in the region, announced the arrest of the UAE cell on Dec. 26 in a joint operation with Saudi Arabia.

"They are adherents of Al-Qaeda and its misguided doctrine," Khalfan told the Saudi-owned Asharq Al Awsat newspaper. "Some of the (cell) members are affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Yemen," he said, referring to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The group had planned bomb attacks on targets in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and other states in the region, rather than setting out to assassinate individuals, Khalfan added.

The Dubai police chief said he was concerned that AQAP members were making their way to the Gulf, but said Saudi anti-terrorism efforts had reduced Al-Qaeda's threat to the region.

The UAE has so far escaped attack by Al-Qaeda or other insurgent groups, but some of the seven emirates in the federation have seen a rise in Islamist sentiment in recent years. Security analysts say Dubai, a cosmopolitan business and tourism hub, could make an attractive target for militants.

AQAP, formed in 2009 by a merger of Al-Qaeda's Yemeni and Saudi branches, remains a threat, although its attempts to pull off a spectacular attack abroad have so far been thwarted.

In 2010, it claimed responsibility for two sophisticated parcel bombs sent to the United States. The bombs were intercepted in Britain and Dubai before they could explode.

In August, Saudi authorities arrested a group of suspected Al-Qaeda-linked militants, mostly Yemeni nationals, in the capital Riyadh, suggesting the group remained highly active.

A Yemeni official said AQAP had individual sponsors in the Gulf, adding that UAE authorities had not officially contacted Sanaa about possible links between the UAE cell and Al-Qaeda.

"We know that Al-Qaeda gets financial support from some individuals in the region and that members of Al-Qaeda come from some neighbouring countries to fight alongside the group in Yemen," said the official, who asked not to be named.

Washington has backed a political transition in Yemen and stepped up drone strikes on suspected militants there to try to curb AQAP's influence and prevent a spillover of violence into U.S. ally Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter.

Khalfan said Al-Qaeda was not the UAE's only security threat, citing dangers from Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood, swept to power in Egypt after the fall of Hosni Mubarak in 2011.

He said the menace from Iran and the Brotherhood - which have significant ideological differences - was similar.

"They both want to export the revolution," he said. "What the Muslim Brothers are aiming for at the moment is to shred and denigrate the reputation of the Gulf rulers."

In July, Khalfan warned of an international plot to overthrow Gulf Arab governments, saying the region needed to be prepared to counter any threat from Muslim Brotherhood sympathisers as well as from Syria and Iran.

The UAE has escaped the upheaval that has shaken the Arab world but moved swiftly to stem any sign of political dissent by detaining more than 60 local Islamists last year over alleged threats to state security and links to a foreign group.

Public prosecutors are investigating women members of a "secret organisation" - a reference to a group UAE authorities say has been formed by Islamists affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood, the state news agency WAM reported on Wednesday.

The Islamists have been accused of "founding and managing an organisation that aims at seizing power" in the UAE, it said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2013/Jan-09/201505-uae-militant-cell-linked-to-yemens-al-qaeda-police-chief.ashx#ixzz2HUY4weXu>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **India, Pakistan warn against escalation over border killings**

NEW DELHI: India delivered a dressing-down Wednesday to Islamabad's envoy to Delhi as it accused Pakistan's army of beheading one of two soldiers killed in Kashmir, but both sides warned against inflaming tensions.



While Pakistan insisted no such incident had taken place and suggested a UN inquiry be held, India denounced the "inhuman" treatment of the pair who were killed two days after a Pakistani soldier was also slain in the Kashmir region.

As India's government mulled over its response, Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid struck a note of caution and warned against exacerbating the situation.

Khurshid said Pakistan's ambassador Salman Bashir had been "spoken to in very strong terms" after he was summoned for an angry rebuke over the killings.

But in a subsequent press conference, Khurshid said that "whatever has happened, should not be escalated".

"We cannot and must not allow for an escalation of a very unwholesome event that has taken place," he added.

The two Indian soldiers died after a firefight erupted in disputed Kashmir on Tuesday. The Indian army said a patrol moving in fog discovered Pakistani troops about 500 metres (yards) inside Indian territory.

"We can confirm that one of the Indian soldiers was beheaded by the Pakistani army," spokesman Jagdeep Dahiya told AFP. "It was a dastardly act as they have taken away the head."

Senior military officers who visited the site of the attack said an attempt had also been made to remove the head of the second soldier.

"There was a slash on the neck of the second body," one officer said in New Delhi on the condition he is not identified by rank or name.

In a sign of a desire for revenge among troops on the ground, the officer said it was "now a matter of prestige, the battalion has to regain its honour".

Defence Minister A.K. Antony said the Pakistan army was guilty of "inhuman" behaviour in the treatment of the bodies while newspaper headlines stoked the tensions, with the Mail Today denouncing "Pak Army Butchers".

But amid the chorus of condemnation, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar appeared on Indian television to issue a firm denial and criticise the statements by authorities in Delhi.

"Let me just say that we are a bit appalled at some statements that are coming in from India because the government of Pakistan has absolutely rejected that any such incident took place," she told India's CNN-IBN network.

"It is not Pakistan's policy to not observe ceasefire on LoC," she added in reference to a de facto border in Kashmir known as the Line of Control.

Khar said Pakistan tempered its language after the death of one of its soldiers on Sunday in a border skirmish and India should have followed suit.

"We believe that these issues must be dealt with in a responsible manner," she said.

"We can ask a third party to do investigation on this, you know that UN military observers exist, we can call them.

"It is not Pakistan's policy to do tit-for-tat... We must not all go back to having a go at each other."

Khurshid has suggested the attack was designed to "derail" an already fragile peace process between the nuclear-armed neighbours which have previously fought three wars.

Relations between political leaders of both countries had been slowly improving following a rupture after the 2008 attacks on Mumbai, which India blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

Steps such as opening up trade and offering more lenient visa regimes have been a feature of recent high-level talks.

Observers said a freeze on high-level dialogue would be among the options for the Indian government.

The clash took place in Mendhar sector, 173 kilometres (107 miles) west of the city of Jammu, the winter capital of the state.

Army sources said there had been further exchanges along the de facto border on Tuesday night which caused no damage and the border was calm on Wednesday.

A ceasefire has been in place since 2003 along the LoC, but it is periodically violated by both sides.

Muslim-majority Kashmir is a Himalayan region that India and Pakistan both claim in full but rule in part. It was the cause of two of their three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/International/2013/Jan-09/201445-india-summons-pakistan-envoy-after-border-attack.ashx#ixzz2HUYNjIQG>

- **Pakistan diplomat summoned over Kashmir clash**

"Deepest concern and protest" conveyed to ambassador over alleged killing of two Indian soldiers by Pakistani troops.

India has conveyed its "deepest concern and protest" to Pakistan's high commissioner in New Delhi over the alleged killing of two Indian soldiers along the countries' defactor border in Kashmir, India's foreign minister says.

Indian army officials say the two Indian soldiers were killed after Pakistani troops crossed the ceasefire line in the Himalayan region and attacked an army patrol on Tuesday.

The Pakistani military has denied that the soldiers were killed, saying that its investigations had revealed no evidence the incident had occurred.

Al Jazeera's Divya Gopalan, reporting from New Delhi, said that Salman Bashir, Pakistan's envoy, had arrived on Wednesday morning to discuss the incident.

"This is a major diplomatic move, because it is very rare for the Pakistani high commissioner to be summoned like this," said Gopalan.

Salman Khurshid, India's foreign minister, said on Wednesday, following the meeting, that Bashir had been "spoken to in very strong terms".

He said that the alleged violation of the Line of Control (LoC), the defacto border that separates the Pakistani- and Indian-administered parts of Kashmir, was "a matter of great concern and if it is not immediately contained it will have an adverse impact [on the peace process]".

"This [attack] has been conveyed as being unacceptable we are doing the best that is possible and I expect there will be some response from the other side," he said.

He added that hostilities "must not be escalated".

Military officers in contact

"The Director-Generals of military operations of both sides have been speaking via hotline since the incident and they are also due to meet," reported Al Jazeera's Gopalan.

She added that military experts are saying that the incident should be treated as a crime, and not an act of war.

The incident was "a significant escalation ... of ceasefire violations and infiltration attempts supported by the Pakistan Army," said Rajesh K Kalia, spokesman for the Indian army's Northern Command.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Khurshid said India would deliver a "proportionate response" to the "ghastly" killings in Kashmir which he said were designed to sabotage an already fragile peace process.

In Islamabad, the Pakistan military denied what it called an "Indian allegation of unprovoked firing".

"This is Indian propaganda to divert attention from an Indian raid on Sunday on a Pakistani post in which a Pakistani soldier was killed," it said in a statement. On Wednesday, Pakistan's foreign office said the allegation was "baseless", saying that Pakistan was prepared for an investigation to be carried out through the United Nations Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).

Kalia said the incident happened in the Mendhar sector of Indian-administered Kashmir.

"Pakistan army troops, having taken advantage of thick fog and mist in the forested area, were moving towards own posts when an alert area domination patrol spotted and engaged the intruders," Kalia said in a statement.

"The fire fight between Pakistan and own troops continued for approximately half an hour after which the intruders retreated back towards their side of Line of Control."

He said the body of one of the slain soldiers was found "badly mutilated". On Wednesday, J Dahiya, India's chief military spokesperson, said that one of the soldiers had been "beheaded", adding that the Indian military was "absolutely convinced" that the Pakistani army was responsible.

Both sides have said that there have been increased skirmishes and increased violations over the past few weeks at the border.

'Possible infiltration'

Al Jazeera's Kamal Hyder, reporting from Islamabad, said neither side would want to escalate the situation along the border.

"It's quite possible that its Kashmiri fighters who may have engaged, who may have been trying to infiltrate along this long, mountainous border. It happens from time to time," he said.

The deaths came after Pakistan said on Sunday that one of its soldiers was killed by Indian shooting, with each side blaming the other for the flare-up.

Firing and small skirmishes between the two countries are common along the LoC that divides the contested Himalayan region of Kashmir between India and Pakistan, despite slowly improving ties in recent years.

The Indian army says eight of its soldiers were killed in 2012, in 75 incidents.

In recent efforts to improve relations, trade and more lenient visa rules have been a feature of talks between senior political leaders from both sides.

Al Jazeera's Gopalan said that despite signs of improving relations, the Indian government remained cautious.

She said it was not clear what action India would take in response to the killing of the soldiers.

"According to the army, it's going through official channels at the moment," she said. "Many are saying that any type of retaliatory action would be hugely unadvised."

India and Pakistan both claim Kashmir in full. It was the cause of two of three wars between the neighbours since independence from Britain in 1947.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2013/01/201318131527741342.html>

*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan DOĞAN**. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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