



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

**Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset**

**The Restructuring Procees of Iraq**

**Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci**

**Energy Security**

**Enerji Güvenliđi**

**Economy News**

**Ekonomi Haberleri**

**Peace Process**

**Barış Süreci**

**Ethnic and Secterian Groups**

**Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar**

**Non State Actors**

**Devlet-dış Aktörler**

**Relations with the West**

**Batı'yla İlişkiler**



## MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

15 APRIL 2013

NO: 1584

<b>1. IRAQ.....</b>	<b>3</b>
• Kobler condemns the assassination of Iraqiya slate's nominee in Diyala (NINA) .....	3
• MoI Undersecretary, Kobler discuss mutual cooperation (alliraqnews).....	3
• Maliki arrives in Basra (NINA).....	4
• Maliki visits Army Tenth Division in Basra (NINA) .....	4
• Maliki calls on security forces to be vigilant while implementing duties (alliraqnews).....	4
• Parliament to discuss amendment of Accountability & Justice Law soon (alliraqnews) .....	5
• Kurdish lawmaker: Kurdish ministers not returning to Baghdad before receiving NA response (NINA).....	5
• Journalists syndicate to conduct residential territories draw on Wednesday (alliraqnews) .....	6
• IIP denounces Harbi Assassination (alliraqnews) .....	6
• Provincial elections results will lead to political majority government, Maliki (Aswat al-Iraq) ...	7
• Maliki charged with "violating" election laws (Aswat al-Iraq) .....	7
• Process of matching voting papers starts in Diwaniya (alliraqnews) .....	7
• 52 notes and violations recorded in special voting, NGO (Aswat al-Iraq).....	8
• 2 elections centers allocated for media cadres in Baghdad (alliraqnews).....	8
• MoJ releases 349 prisoners (alliraqnews) .....	8
• Egyptian Tourism Minister to arrive in Baghdad today (Aswat al-Iraq) .....	9
• Iraqi oil delegation arrives in Cairo (Aswat al-Iraq).....	9
• Iraqi embassy: No further plans for Egypt pipeline (Daily News Egypt).....	10
• Iraq reports searching Syrian plane; no arms found (AP) .....	10
• Saudi goods to enter Iraq soon (Aswat al-Iraq).....	11
• Election candidate among 10 dead in Iraq attacks (AFP) .....	11
• Candidate escapes an assassination attempt in Baquba (NINA).....	12
• 5 Policemen killed, wounded in Falluja (NINA) .....	12
• Officer killed in western Anbar (NINA).....	13
• Doctor wounded in Kirkuk (NINA) .....	13
• 2 Policemen killed, one policeman, civilian wounded in Falluja (NINA) .....	13
• 19 Policemen killed, wounded in corpse bomb explosion south of Mosul (NINA).....	14
• 27 Projects referred to implementation in Maysan (alliraqnews) .....	14
• Parliamentary Committee discusses pensions of former members of local councils (alliraqnews).....	14
• Talks to build an Iraqi satellite in Paris (Aswat al-Iraq) .....	15
• Iraq awards LSIS \$45.8m deal to build GIS facilities (AMEinfo).....	15
<b>2. IRAN.....</b>	<b>16</b>
• Iran to Unveil Home-Made Chopper Simulators.....	16
• Iran arrests illegal foreign nationals.....	16
• UN representative hails Iran's cooperation .....	17
• Iran-Oman cooperation can help promote peace in the region .....	17
• Iran gasoline export to hit 30m liters per day by 2015: Official .....	19



• Iran rejects rumors about possible radiation leak at Bushehr plant .....	20
• Iran urges enhanced security cooperation with UAE .....	21
<b>3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE .....</b>	<b>22</b>
• PA liaison office secures release of Hebron teen .....	22
• Israel's population exceeds 8 million .....	23
• 'We will not give in or surrender,' PM says as nation remembers fallen .....	24
• Peres: Peace to prevail by Israel's 70th birthday .....	28
<b>4. AFRICA and EGYPT .....</b>	<b>31</b>
• Religious extremism worries Tunisians .....	31
• Tunisia, Algeria crack down on terrorists .....	33
• Mediterranean states adopt joint security strategy .....	35
• Hosni Mubarak arrives at court .....	36
• Libyan arms controlled by non-state actors: UN .....	37
• Egypt to try Brotherhood members accused of torture .....	39
<b>5. JORDAN and LEBANON .....</b>	<b>40</b>
• UN envoy meets with Hezbollah official .....	40
• Source to NOW: PSP hurdles obstructing cabinet's birth .....	41
• FPM official: Jumblatt's interests go against Christians' .....	43
<b>6. SYRIA .....</b>	<b>44</b>
• Syria's jihadist front .....	44
• Lebanon officials hold security meeting amid Syria shelling .....	46
• Syria Islamist brigades to Al-Nusra: Who are you to proclaim yourself as leaders? .....	47
<b>7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA .....</b>	<b>49</b>
• Kuwait silences opposition leader with 5 year jail .....	49
• Saudi feared religious police storm Al Janadriyah UAE pavilion .....	50
• Gulf states voice concerns over nuclear implication of Iran's Bushehr quake .....	52
<b>8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN .....</b>	<b>53</b>
• Two US-led Italian soldiers wounded in Afghan bomb blast .....	53
• Afghan forces kill Taliban key commander .....	54
• 10 militants killed in Afghan raids: gov't .....	55
• Militants kill 4 people in southern Afghan town .....	56
• US violated human rights by killing 17 Afghan civilians: Karzai .....	56
• US trapped in an endless war in Afghanistan: James Jennings .....	57
• Afghan senators criticize security institutions for instability .....	59

## 1. IRAQ

- **Kobler condemns the assassination of Iraqiya slate's nominee in Diyala (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (NINA) - - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Martin Kobler, condemned the assassination of Naji al-Harbi, Iraqiya slate's nominee for Diyala Provincial Council.

In a statement to the press on Sunday, Apr. 14, Kobler condemned all kinds of election's violence, expressing his condolences to Harbi's family.

Candidate of Iraqiya Arab Alliance slate, headed by Saleh al-Mutlaq, was killed when an improvised explosive device explosion, northeast of Baquba.

Security source told NINA that an improvised explosive device went off against the car of Diyala Councilman, Najim al-Harbi, in Muqdadiya district.

He added that Harbi was seriously wounded he was rushed to hospital but died of his wounds.

- **Mol Undersecretary, Kobler discuss mutual cooperation (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) -The Interior Ministry Undersecretary, Adnan al-Asadi, discussed with the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Iraq, Martin Kobler, a number of mutual issues besides discussing the cooperation that helps sustain the stability in Iraq.

A statement by the ministry cited "Kobler expressed his tribute and appreciation for all the employees of the Interior Ministry who are participating in achieving security and stability for their country, congratulating them on the success of the local elections' special voting devoted for the security elements."

"For his part, Asadi welcomed Kobler's call to visit the prisons of the ministry by the United Nations committees, stressing that "The ministry welcomes receiving the committees from different organizations as it is earnest in applying the international norms in field of respecting the detainees' rights," according to the statement.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=32082](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32082)

- **Maliki arrives in Basra (NINA)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD / NINA / Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived in the province of Basra today 14. April.

A familiar source told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that Prime Minister, head of state of law coalition, Nuri al-Maliki arrived in Basra province today coming from the province of Maysan.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki visited Maysan province today, and opened a number of projects in the province and gave speech in gathering of State of Law supporters.

- **Maliki visits Army Tenth Division in Basra (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad / NINA / Prime Minister, the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Nouri al-Maliki visited the tenth

mechanism Division Army headquarters in Basra.

An informed source told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that Maliki met, at the headquarters of the tenth Division, with leaders and a number of officers.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived in the province of Basra today coming from Maysan province, where he opened a number of projects.

- **Maliki calls on security forces to be vigilant while implementing duties (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The General Commander of the Armed Forces, Nouri al-Maliki, called the security forces to be vigilant while implementing their duties.

A statement by Maliki's office received by AIN cited "Maliki emphasized, during his visit to the headquarters of the Iraqi Army 10th Division in Maysan province, the unity of Iraq."

"He praised the efforts exerted by the security forces, calling them to be more cautious," the statement added.

“Addressing the soldiers, he mentioned that Iraq needs their efforts and sacrifices to eliminate the security breaches and the sectarianism,” the statement continued.

“He confirmed that Iraq is a country of huge resources and it will be stable thanks to the efforts of the security forces,” the statement concluded.

Maliki arrived at Maysan on Sunday morning.

- **Parliament to discuss amendment of Accountability & Justice Law soon (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) -The head of the parliament Accountability & Justice Committee, MP Qais al-Shadhir, announced that "The proposed amendment on the Accountability & Justice Law will be discussed at the parliament by end of current April."

Shadhir told All Iraq News Agency (AIN) on Sunday "The proposal of amending the A & J Law was sent by the Council of Ministers to the parliament," noting "After

20th, April, it will be discussed at the parliament."

The government has approved the amendment of the A & J Law and it is scheduled to be submitted to the parliament for approval

- **Kurdish lawmaker: Kurdish ministers not returning to Baghdad before receiving NA response (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (NINA) – Kurdish lawmaker, Hassan Jihad, said that Kurdish ministers and lawmakers are not returning to Baghdad before receiving the National Alliance replay to the message delivered last week by the Kurdish blocs' delegation.

In a statement to the press on Sunday, Apr. 14, Jihad said that the that the Region has not yet made a decision on the return of Kurdish lawmakers and ministers to Baghdad; because such a decision depends of the Kurdish side evaluating the reply of the National Alliance on the Kurdish blocs' message. He stressed that Kurdish response depends on the National Alliance's response.

Jihad pointed out that talks between Kurdish side and the National Alliance continue, affirming that that it is natural for the National Alliance to respond on the Kurdish Alliance's message, and is waiting for it to decide its position.

- **Journalists syndicate to conduct residential territories draw on Wednesday (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Iraqi Journalists Syndicate called the journalists who submitted for pieces of land to attend the national theater hall on next Wednesday to conduct the draw.

the Head of the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate, Muayad al-Lamy, reported in statement received by AIN "The draw will be attended by the Governor of Salah-il-Din province, Salah Abdul Razaq, and about (5,000) journalists who submitted for pieces of residential land in Baghdad."

"The formed committee, from Baghdad Governorate, Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works and the Journalists Syndicate, has accomplished all required documents to grant the territories deeds," the statement added. \END\

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=32087](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32087)

- **IIP denounces Harbi Assassination (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) -The Iraqi Islamic Party condemned the sinful operation that led to martyrdom of Najim al-Harbi, the local elections' nominee, describing it as serious surge of violence.

The IIP pointed out in a statement received by AIN on Sunday "The political tensions reached utmost degree represented by the rise of the assassinations pointed to certain electoral slates' nominees."

"The Party called on the government to assume their real duties in protecting the Iraqis' lives and address its poor performance," the statement added.

The nominee, Harbi was killed on Sunday due to IED targeting his motorcade in Muqdadiya district associated to Diyala province.

- **Provincial elections results will lead to political majority government, Maliki (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

MISSAN/ Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki stated here today that the coming results of the provincial election will lead to forming a politically majority government on both local and central governments.

In a general assembly to his bloc here, attended by Aswat al-Iraq, he added "we will push to form local and central governments with political majority".

He added that the success of the government depends on capabilities of the candidates not party allegiance.

Premier Maliki arrived here today and inaugurated a gas project to a power station, an airport for the oil Chinese company and oil treatment factory.

- **Maliki charged with "violating" election laws (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqiya National Unified Bloc charged here today head of

State of Law bloc and commander-in-chief of the armed forces of "surpassing" the laws of the electoral process.

In a statement, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, the bloc charged Premier Nouri al-Maliki of utilizing Iraqiya TV for attacking political partners before hours of the special voting of yesterday.

It charged the commander of police forces in Karbala of providing buses for pro-State of Law voters, irrespective of the protests of the observers.

The statement added that vehicles carrying the pictures of head of the Iraqiya National Unified Bloc Iyad Alawi were prevented from entering the town.

- **Process of matching voting papers starts in Diwaniya (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Diwaniya (AIN) –The Matching and Settlement process of the voting papers of Special Vote started in Diwaniya province in accordance with the measures of the Count Centers.

A source from the Independent High Electoral Commission in the province said

to AIN "The Count Centers started the Matching and Settlement process after receiving all the voting boxes with the attendance of the observers of the political sides and the Non-Governmental Organizations."/ /

- **52 notes and violations recorded in special voting, NGO (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: NGO Tamouz organization in Iraq registered 52 notes and violations during the special voting day, held yesterday, for defence and interior personnel.

The violations were for electoral propaganda, using copied IDs and non-availability of some names of voters that resulted in some "problems" with electoral personnel and officials.

The statement added that the percentage of participation reached to 55-65%.

- **2 elections centers allocated for media cadres in Baghdad (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Independent High Electoral Commission IHEC allocated two elections centers for journalists and media cadres in Rusafa and Karkh sides of Baghdad to practice their rights in voting for their representatives in the provincial councils.

The Director of Rusafa Electoral Directorate, Hussein al-Tai, stated to AIN "The IHEC allocated an elections center in Mansur Hotel for journalists in Karkh and an elections center in the Sheraton Hotel for the journalists in Rusafa side of Bagdad."

"The two elections centers will be opened as the rest elections centers at 7:00 AM until 5:00 PM," he added.

- **MoJ releases 349 prisoners (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The Ministry of Justice announced releasing (349) pensioners who finished their sentences period from the Iraqi correction centers.

The official spokesperson of the Ministry of Justice, Wesam al-Fereji, reported in statement received by AIN "The Iraqi

Correction Directorate released (349) prisoners, including (18) women," noting that "The prisoners who were released have finished their sentences period in accordance with the legal regulations."

"The Iraqi Correction Directorate continues in following up the cases of the prisoners in order to accelerate resolving their cases and avoiding the routine procedures which delay releasing the prisoners," he added

- **Egyptian Tourism Minister to arrive in Baghdad today (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Egyptian Tourism Minister shall arrive here today to enhance bilateral relation.

The visit is to develop bilateral relations following the political change in Egypt in 2011.

Minister Hisham Za'zou' will head a high ranking delegation to discuss and enhance tourism relations between the two countries.

Discussions will be held to provide Egyptian support and training Iraqi

tourism cadre and maintenance of old manuscripts.

It is expected the Egyptian delegation will meet Premier Nouri al-Maliki, vice-president Khudhair al-Khuza'i.

It is expected that the talks will tackle cancelling visas between the two sides and enhancing bilateral trade.

Iraqi-Egyptian relations witnessed some development following the visit of the Egyptian President Mohammed Mursi during Baghdad Summit in March, 2012.

- **Iraqi oil delegation arrives in Cairo (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: Iraqi oil ministry delegation arrived in Cairo today to discuss providing Egypt with Iraqi oil.

The discussion will tackle providing Egypt with about 4 million barrels on a monthly basis to overcome its fuel crisis.

Egyptian media sources said that the delegation comprised 11 Iraqi experts to discuss the agreement reached between the two sides during the visit of the Egyptian premier to Baghdad last month.

- **Iraqi embassy: No further plans for Egypt pipeline (Daily News Egypt)**

Hend El-Behary / April 14, 2013

There are no further plans regarding an oil pipeline to Egypt from Iraq, according to the Iraqi embassy in Egypt.

An agreement between the Iraq State Company for Oil Projects (ISCOP) and Egypt was signed recently, the Embassy has confirmed.

However, the Embassy also said there are no specific plans on how to extend the pipeline to Egypt, as well as the amounts of crude oil which will be supplied.

“There is currently an agreement between us,” said the Embassy’s media representative. “But we haven’t yet received any official communications from Baghdad regarding their plans.”

He continued: “There is already an oil pipeline from Iraq to Amman in Jordan, but the embassy hasn’t received any additional news regarding this issue.”

A technical delegation from the Iraqi Oil Ministry arrived on Saturday in Cairo and is currently in talks with the Egyptian

government to supply the latter with 4m barrels of crude oil.

Last month Egypt signed an agreement with Iraq to construct crude oil pipelines passing through Jordan between the two countries in order to start refining oil in Egypt into products such as diesel, gasoline and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Egypt produces 22,000 tonnes of diesel per day while consumption has reached 35,000 tonnes per day.

According to the Anadolu news agency, Egypt has been planning to announce an international tender for shipping companies to transport Egypt oil imports from Iraq this month.

<http://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2013/04/14/iraqi-embassy-no-further-plans-for-egypt-pipeline/>

- **Iraq reports searching Syrian plane; no arms found (AP)**

BAGHDAD (AP) -- An Iraqi aviation official says authorities ordered a Damascus-bound Syrian plane transiting Iraqi

airspace to land for inspection, but that no weapons were found onboard.

Nassir Bandar, Iraq's top civil aviation official, says inspectors checked the Airbus passenger plane traveling from Moscow on Sunday morning. It was the first time Iraq has reported inspecting a Syrian plane.

The United States has been pressuring Iraq to do more to ensure that its airspace and territory are not being used to ferry weapons to Syrian President Bashar Assad's embattled regime.

Baghdad has stepped up inspections of Iranian flights in recent days. Tehran is a major backer of Assad and also maintains friendly relations with the Shiite-led government Baghdad.

[http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML\\_IRAQ\\_SYRIA?SITE=FLPET&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT](http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/M/ML_IRAQ_SYRIA?SITE=FLPET&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT)

- **Saudi goods to enter Iraq soon (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: The Iraqi government disclosed today that the

Saudi goods will enter Iraq soon through Arar border vent, as reported by secretary general of the Cabinet Ali al-Alaq.

Alaq said to Iraqi Media Network that "there are some developments in Iraqi-Saudi relations with new hits that more talks will be held".

"The previous period witnessed a number of meetings to open the vent and enhancing bilateral relations", he elaborated.

Earlier, Premier Nouri al-Maliki announced Iraqi moves towards Saudi Arabia following "cool" relations during the past period.

- **Election candidate among 10 dead in Iraq attacks (AFP)**

AFP –14 April 2013

Attacks north of the Iraqi capital on Sunday killed at least 10 people, including a provincial elections candidate and six policemen, the latest in an uptick in violence just days ahead of polls.

The credibility of the vote, Iraq's first since 2010, has been drawn into question as 14

election hopefuls have been murdered and just 12 of the country's 18 provinces will be taking part.

In restive Diyala province, election candidate Najm al-Harbi was driving in his car along a highway when a bomb exploded, killing him, two of his brothers and a bodyguard, police and a medic said.

An official from Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlak's office confirmed Harbi's death, and said he was the head of the deputy premier's list in Diyala province.

Harbi's killing comes a day after Hatim Mohammed al-Dulaimi, a candidate for Salaheddin provincial council, was shot dead by gunmen near his home in Baiji, north of the Iraqi capital.

Soldiers and policemen cast their ballots for the provincial elections on Saturday, a week ahead of the main vote, the country's first since March 2010 parliamentary polls.

The election comes amid a spike in unrest and a long-running political crisis between Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and several of his erstwhile government partners.

<http://uk.news.yahoo.com/14th-iraqi-provincial-polls-candidate-killed-095757080.html>;

- **Candidate escapes an assassination attempt in Baquba (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Baquba / NINA / A candidate for the Diyala provincial council elections, Adnan al-Azzawi, the head of the Diyala will coalition survived an assassination attempt by an armed attack northeast of Baquba on Sunday afternoon 14, April.

A security source told the reporter of the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / that unidentified gunmen, with automatic weapons, attacked the convoy of Azzawi as it passed in the Imam Weis area northeast of Baquba, damaging one of the motorcade vehicles without injuries.

He added that the security force rushed to the scene and began a raid and search for the attackers.

- **5 Policemen killed, wounded in Falluja (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Ramadi (NINA) – Five policemen killed and wounded when a car bomb exploded on Sunday, Apr. 14, in Falluja.

Security source told NINA that a car bomb exploded near a police checkpoint at Falluja's southern entrance, killing two policemen and wounding three others.

- **Officer killed in western Anbar (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Ramadi (NINA) – A military officer at the rank of captain killed in an armed attack on Sunday, Apr. 14, in Qa'em district, far western Anbar province.

Security source told NINA that armed group opened fire from a moving car at a military bus, carrying military personnel, on the highway south of Qa'em district.

The source added that the attack resulted in the killing an officer at the rank of captain.

A joint military and police force closed the area and started a search for the attackers.

- **Doctor wounded in Kirkuk (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Kirkuk (NINA) – A doctor wounded while gunmen fire while attempting to kidnapping him.

Security source told NINA on Sunday, Apr. 14, that gunmen attempted to kidnap Dr. Amir Fatih al-Jalali, an Orthopedics, in downtown Kirkuk.

He added that gunmen opened fire at the doctor, when failed to kidnap him, seriously wounding him and fled.

- **2 Policemen killed, one policeman, civilian wounded in Falluja (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Ramadi (NINA) – Three policemen and one civilian killed and wounded on Sunday, Apr. 14, when a checkpoint attacked in downtown Falluja, Anbar province.

Security source told NINA that gunmen opened fire from a moving car at a police checkpoint, in downtown Falluja, killing two policemen and wounding one, as well as wounding one civilian happened to be nearby when the attack took place.

The source added that police closed that area and started searching for the attackers.

- **19 Policemen killed, wounded in corpse bomb explosion south of Mosul (NINA)**

14 April 2013

Mosul (NINA) – 19 Policemen killed and wounded on Sunday, Apr. 14, when a corpse bomb exploded south of Mosul.

Security source told NINA that 5 policemen killed and 14 others wounded, including 4 officers, when a policeman's corpse, stuffed with explosives, went off in a village of Hamamal Aleel district, south of Mosul.

- **27 Projects referred to implementation in Maysan (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –Maysan province announced referring (27) construction and service projects for implementation with gross cost of IQD (18) billion.

Maysan Governorate mentioned in statement received by AIN "The projects, which were referred for implementation included extending the electricity networks to residential neighborhoods and rehabilitating the electricity network in Dafas area."

"The projects also included establishing yards with artificial grass at the center of the province and building three schools in Maysan," the statement added.

"The province intends to establish lighting network at the holy shrine of Imam, Abdullah Bin Ali, in Qalat Salih area and to establish a youth forum in Sayed Ahmed Rufai area," the statement pointed out.

- **Parliamentary Committee discusses pensions of former members of local councils (alliraqnews)**

14 April 2013

Baghdad (AIN) –The committee concerned with pension rights of the members of local councils discussed the mechanism to find the solutions for their retirement salaries.

The committee reported in statement received by AIN "The State Secretary for

Provinces Affairs, Torhan al-Mufti, held a meeting with MP Huda Sajad as the representative of the Provinces and Regions Parliamentary Committee and the Director of the General Pension Directorate, Ahmed Abdul Jabbar, in addition to representatives of the Ministry of State for Provinces Affairs."

Mufti assured that "The work continues to find the suitable solutions for retirement salaries for the former members of the local councils."

"The State Ministry demanded the Provinces and Regions Parliamentary Committee to amend the law article (21) related to the retirement salaries of former members of local councils," the statement added.

"The Ministry will file a decree to the Presidency of Cabinet and the Ministry of Finance to return the former members of local councils for their previous posts as employees in the governmental institutions," the statement pointed out.

- **Talks to build an Iraqi satellite in Paris (Aswat al-Iraq)**

14 April 2013

BAGHDAD/ Aswat al-Iraq: An Iraqi delegation, headed by Minister of Communications, held talks in Paris with specialized European company in satellite industry to discuss building an Iraqi satellite.

Several meetings were held, during which the company expressed readiness to design and industrialize the requested satellite, including other accessories related to control stations and connections with the satellite.

- **Iraq awards LSIS \$45.8m deal to build GIS facilities (AMEinfo)**

Iraq has awarded South Korea's LS Industrial Systems (LSIS) a \$45.8m order to build two Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) facility. LSIS will set up two GIS facilities in Baghdad and one each in Mosul, the second-largest city in northern Iraq, and Karbala, southwest of Baghdad. A GIS facility converts and distributes high-voltage power for household and factory use.

<http://www.ameinfo.com/iraq-awards-lsis-458m-deal-build-337577>

## 2. IRAN

### • Iran to Unveil Home-Made Chopper Simulators

TEHRAN (FNA)- The Iranian Army plans to unveil more home-made chopper simulators in the current Iranian year (March 2013 - March 2014), an army commander announced on Monday.

"Four chopper simulators will be unveiled in (the Iranian calendar year of) 1392," Commander of the Iranian Army Ground Force Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan told reporters on the threshold of the country's National Army Day.

He added that the country's defense industries are also working on plans to manufacture a national chopper.

As regards the army's plans and programs for the current year, Pourdastan said his forces will stage 8 special wargames this year in a bid to maintain and boost their defense capabilities.

Senior Iranian military officials announced in September 2010 that Iran gained self-sufficiency in manufacturing simulators,

adding that the country possessed more than 800 home-made simulators then.

In August 2010, the Iranian Army started using two home-made Cobra Chopper simulators in an airborne base in n Iran's western city of Kermanshah.

In recent years, Iran has made great achievements in the defense sector and gained self-sufficiency in manufacturing essential military hardware and defense systems.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107160888>

### • Iran arrests illegal foreign nationals

TEHRAN, Apr. 15 (MNA) – Four Saudi and Tunisian nationals who were reportedly equipped with military imaging facilities have been arrested in southeastern city of Saravan in Sistan and Baluchistan Province.

Iran's police arrested these four illegal foreign nationals in a mountainous region of Godar Nahuk. Saudi nationals spoke English fluently, and inspections by the police discovered two laptop computers,

filming and photography cameras, two cartridges of pistols with 7 bullets, and a number of books.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1820057>

- **UN representative hails Iran's cooperation**

TEHRAN, Apr. 15 (MNA) – A senior UN representative in Tehran has hailed Iran's cooperation with the organization, calling for more collaboration in all areas.

Gary Lewis, United Nations new resident coordinator in Tehran, made the remarks during a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi here on Saturday.

He added, "Iran can count on the role of the United Nations' agencies, funds and programs on the ground, to work in partnership - and with transparency, impartiality and respect - to deliver on mutually-agreed development goals."

Elsewhere in his remarks, the UN official expressed his condolences over the recent earthquake in city of Bushehr in southern Iran that took the lives of 37 people and injured over 950 others.

For his part, Salehi said that Iran has contributed significantly to the UN to help solve regional issues and fulfill its heavy tasks.

He also elaborated on Iran's activities to realize UN's developing plans in the region, adding that Tehran always attaches great importance to cooperation with the United Nations because developments in the Middle East region are sensitive.

During the meeting, Lewis also submitted his credentials to the Iranian foreign minister.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1820008>

- **Iran-Oman cooperation can help promote peace in the region**

TEHRAN, Apr. 15 (MNA) – The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Sultanate of Oman can help promote peace and security in the region through close cooperation, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said at a meeting with a senior Omani official in Tehran on Saturday.

“The two countries can play a constructive and useful role in promoting peace and security in the region through cooperation with each other,” Ahmadinejad told the speaker of the Omani Advisory Council (Majles A’Shura), Khalid bin Hilal Al Mawali.

The Iranian president said, “Now that the enemies are determined to separate nations from one another through (creating) conflict and discord, cooperation between the two countries is more essential than in the past. And the two countries can foil the enemies’ plots in the region through standing by each other.”

“There is great potential for increasing the level of relations that should be utilized in favor of the two nations,” Ahmadinejad said, adding that efforts should be made to expand parliamentary cooperation between Iran and Oman.

The Omani official said that Muscat was keen to strengthen its relations with Tehran, noting, “Oman regards the stance of the Islamic Republic of Iran toward regional and international issues as well-

intentioned and welcomes and supports it.”

Iran, Oman call for expansion of economic ties

Iranian Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani held a meeting with his Omani counterpart on Saturday, during which he called for the expansion of cooperation between the parliaments of the two countries.

Larijani described Iran-Oman political relationship as “good” and expressed hope that efforts would be stepped up to further develop economic ties.

He also emphasized the importance of the implementation of the project to transport gas from Iran to Oman.

Mawali said that Muscat would welcome the expansion of economic ties with the Islamic Republic.

He also commented on Iran’s stance toward the Palestinian issue and hailed the country’s support for the Palestinian people.

Iranian, Omani officials call for peaceful solution to Syrian crisis

Mawali, who began his five-day trip to Iran on Saturday, also met with Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi on Saturday.

During the meeting, bilateral issues and the situation in Syria were discussed, with Iranian foreign minister saying that Iran was ready to help pave the way for dialogue between the Syrian government and opposition groups.

There is no military solution to the crisis in Syria, Salehi said, criticizing interventionist measures by outsiders in the Arab country.

For his part, the speaker of the Omani Advisory Council said that the crisis in Syria should be resolved through a political solution.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1820010>

- **Iran gasoline export to hit 30m litters per day by 2015: Official**

Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Alireza Zeighami says the Islamic Republic is expected to

export 30 million liters of gasoline per day by 2015, despite the illegal US-led sanctions against the country.

Zeighami, who is also the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), said on Monday that Iran's gasoline production will hit 70 million liters per day by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2014).

Before the implementation of refining projects, Iran's gasoline production capacity stood at 41.5 million liters per day which will increase to 70 million liters per day by March 2014, said the Iranian official.

He further said that upon the completion of all Iranian refining projects, the country's gasoline output will rise to 144 million liters per day.

Last month, Iran inaugurated its biggest gasoline production hub with a capacity of 16 million liters per day near the central city of Shazand.

Iran attained self-sufficiency in fuel production after its international suppliers

stopped selling gasoline to Tehran under US pressure.

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

The sanctions, which prevent the EU member states from purchasing Iran's oil or extending insurance coverage for tankers carrying Iranian crude, came into effect on July 1, 2012.

The illegal US-engineered sanctions were imposed based on the unfounded accusation that Iran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran rejects the allegation, arguing that as a committed signatory to Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/15/298385/iran-to-increase-gasoline-exports/>

- **Iran rejects rumors about possible radiation leak at Bushehr plant**

A strong earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale struck the town of Kaki, some 90 kilometers southeast of Bushehr on April 9. At least 37 people were killed and more than 1,050 others were injured.

The deputy of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has dismissed as baseless the rumors about possible radiation leaks at Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) following an earthquake in the southern parts of the country.

“Bushehr nuclear power plant has been constructed to withstand an eight Richter magnitude earthquake near the plant,” Mohammad Ahmadian said on Sunday.



“Bushehr NPP has been designed based on the most advanced and strict international regulations,” Ahmadian said,

adding that Iran's Nuclear Safety System Center, which is under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has overseen the safety of the power plant during its construction.

Given the magnitude of the recent earthquake and the roughly 100-kilometer distance between the epicenter of the quake and the site of Bushehr nuclear facility, Ahmadian said, "It is natural that the quake would not create any problems for the Bushehr NPP."

A strong earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale struck the town of Kaki, some 90 kilometers southeast of Bushehr on April 9. At least 37 people were killed and more than 1,050 others were injured.

Ahmadian made the remarks after the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council called on the IAEA to "send a specialized technical team to inspect the Bushehr nuclear plant and investigate potential damage."

The Iranian official said there were systems inside the plant that would disconnect it from the national grid and

turn off the reactor in case of a strong earthquake.

Bushehr nuclear power plant officially began its operations in September 2011, generating electricity at 40 percent of its capacity.

The 1000-megawatt plant, which is operating under the full supervision of the IAEA, reached its maximum power generation capacity in August 2012.

Iran and Russia have assured the international community that the plant is fully compliant with high-level safety standards and IAEA safeguards.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/15/298330/iran-rejects-rumors-about-bushehr-plant/>

- **Iran urges enhanced security cooperation with UAE**



Iran Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar has stressed the importance of strengthening all-out cooperation with the United Arab Emirates, particularly in security fields.

Speaking to reporters upon his arrival in Abu Dhabi on Sunday, Mohammad-Najjar said Iran and the UAE enjoy cordial relations, expressing hope that his visit would result in the further expansion of bilateral cooperation.

He added that his visit is taking place at the invitation of the UAE Interior Minister Lt. General Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

The Iranian minister said during talks with senior UAE officials, the two sides will discuss the expansion of security cooperation, the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime, and increasing border exchanges.

The Emirati minister, for his part, said his country attaches great significance to bolstering ties with Iran and called on the two countries to promote bilateral

economic cooperation and remove obstacles in the way of enhanced relations.

He added that Iran and the UAE should have the highest level of mutual relations and expressed hope that negotiations between the two countries' officials would yield positive results.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/14/298275/iran-urges-security-ties-with-uae/>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **PA liaison office secures release of Hebron teen**

HEBRON (Ma'an) -- Israel released a 13-year-old boy from prison custody on Monday after detaining him for throwing stones, Palestinian officials said.

Sherif Omar was arrested in Hebron and released after discussions with the Palestinian Authority liaison office.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=585727>

- **Israel's population exceeds 8 million**

JERUSALEM (AFP) -- Israel's population has passed the eight million mark, the Central Bureau of Statistics said on Sunday, as the state prepared to mark 65 years since its founding.

"The population of Israel, on the eve of the 65th Independence Day, is 8,018,000 people," a CBS press release said, noting that Israel counted just 806,000 residents at the time of its establishment in 1948.

Israel's Jewish population stands at 6,042,000 people comprising 75.3 percent, with the country's Arab minority 1,658,000 representing 20.7 percent, and non-Jewish immigrants and their children at 318,000 making up four percent of the nation's residents.

The Central Bureau of Statistics counts among Israel's residents the roughly 270,000 Palestinians living in east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 Six Day War and later annexed in a move not recognised by the international community.

According to the CBS, since last year's Independence Day Israel's population grew by 137,000 people.

The latest figures also showed that six Israeli cities have more than 200,000 residents: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, Rishon LeTzion, Ashdod and Petah Tikvah.

Israelis begin marking Independence Day on Monday evening, when residents will let off fireworks and gather in the streets of major cities to sing and party.

Tuesday marks the official celebration of the anniversary of the declaration of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. Israelis mark the day according to the Jewish calendar, which this year places the holiday on April 16.

Palestinians mark the occasion on May 15, when they commemorate the Nakba, or catastrophe of the creation of Israel, which sparked the exodus of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=585785>

- **‘We will not give in or surrender,’ PM says as nation remembers fallen**

A two-minute siren brought the country to a halt at 11 a.m. Monday, as Israel continued its Memorial Day events in remembrance of 25,578 war and terror victims.

Speaking at the official state ceremony for Israel’s fallen, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who lost his brother Yoni in the 1976 Entebbe raid, said he had been asked how to cope by children he met recently who had lost parents in wars or terror attacks.

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“I answered honestly that I don’t know how to advise on how to manage with a loss like that. I told them that the death of my brother toughened me,” he told those gathered at the military cemetery at Mount Herzl. “We know that there is no real relief or comforting.”

Netanyahu also said Israel would continue to fight but also work toward peace.

“We will continue to work to make peace with our neighbors and to defend our land,” he said. “From the day of Israel’s birth great forces tried to destroy her. They never succeeded and will never succeed.”

Some 1.5 million Israelis were expected to visit cemeteries and memorial sites for services Sunday evening and Monday. All in all, 23,085 members of the country’s security forces died while in active service since Israel’s 1947-8 War of Independence, along with those who fought in Zionist pre-state militias going back to 1860.

Later Monday, when darkness descends, Israel will pass into its 65th Independence Day in a striking transition from sirens and memory to fireworks and revelry.

Memorial Day began on Sunday night with a one-minute siren at 8 p.m. and an official ceremony at the Western Wall.

The day commemorates, in addition to servicemen and women, the 2,493 civilians who were killed in terror attacks.

Speaking at a ceremony for terror victims, Netanyahu said violence against civilians had been a constant challenge for the Zionist enterprise, surrounded by enemies who sought to kill or maim.

“We will not give in or surrender. We will pursue the terrorists relentlessly and we will strike them in any place. Terror is not from heaven, it is a mortal act,” he said. “Our willpower is greater than their willpower. We will never be like the murders who do not hesitate to slaughter innocent people. we will not teach our children vengeance and hatred.”

At a ceremony in Jerusalem marking deaths in anti-Semitic incidents and terror attacks around the world, Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky said that Israelis and Jews in the Diaspora are dealing with “one front” in terms of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli activity.

Sharansky said he toured US college campuses last week, where “enemies of Israel are made and the young generation of Jews grow distant from us,” but stressed that Israeli emissaries work to “strengthen the bond between Jews and Israel.”

Judea Pearl, father of Daniel Pearl, said that his son’s brutal murder in Pakistan 11 years ago helped “turn around the war against barbarism,” adding that the murder helped to bring about the collapse of “moral relativism” and showed there are “simple criteria for good and bad.”

Over the past year, 92 names were added to the list of fallen among the ranks of Israel’s security forces. That number includes all soldiers who died while in active service, whether they fell in the battlefield or died of accidents or disease.

Speaking at the Kiryat Shaul military cemetery in Tel Aviv, Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon said the bereaved families carry the burden of Israel’s existence on their shoulders.

“The pain and the agony, that accompany you every day, are our national lot,” he said. “The price that you paid for the continued existence of the State of Israel is hard to bear and unimaginable.”

Earlier, Ya’alon sent a letter to bereaved families saying that Israel is nation that

seeks peace, but will continue to fight for its security.

“In their deaths those who fell bequeathed to us life and also the right to fight for our existence here,” he wrote. “The struggle is not over, rather it is changing in nature, heading in new directions and demands from us to each time to take up the fight anew.”

In the Jerusalem neighborhood of Mea She’arim, anti-Zionist ultra-Orthodox Jews deliberately marched during the siren to protest the creation of Israel, carrying signs that said they “mourn the 65 years of Israel’s existence.”

Anti-Zionist men marching during the two-minute siren on Monday morning. (photo credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Anti-Zionist men marching during the two-minute siren on Monday morning. (photo credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

At Jerusalem’s Western Wall on Sunday evening, the beginning of Memorial Day, President Shimon Peres addressed a ceremony attended by bereaved families.

“We will not forget even for a moment and will always remember those to whom the survival of Israel and its glory are indebted,” Peres said at the Western Wall plaza. “Those who over the 65 years of the state’s existence, protected her with their bodies, their blood and their lives, defended her borders and the security of her citizens, her independence and her freedom.”

Israel, the president said, “is as dear to us as the bravery of her fighters, and as dear as the depth of the sorrow for each fallen soldier. Here, next to the sacred stones of the Kotel, I say on behalf of all of Israel, that you, the fallen of Israel’s wars deserve eternal glory and our ultimate gratitude.”

Speaking after Peres, IDF Chief of General Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz reflected on his own encounters with bereavement, with “all the mothers and fathers I knew, the sons and daughters who are no more.”

“Between the eyes of the sons that are lit through the stones of hope and dreams of the Jewish people,” he said, indicating the Western Wall, “I find my peers, my soldiers and commanders. In their

sacrifice, the sons and daughters have become forever ingrained in the character of the state. Their stories of dedication and courage remind us to whom we owe the fact that we can walk these paths. It is no coincidence that we call them the salt of the earth. They are the essence of the tears of the Land of Israel.”

Soldiers stand at attention during a memorial service for Israel's fallen at Jerusalem's Western Wall, Sunday, April 14, 2013 (photo credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Soldiers stand at attention during a memorial service for Israel's fallen at Jerusalem's Western Wall, Sunday, April 14, 2013 (photo credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Earlier Sunday, Netanyahu addressed Israel's bereaved families, stressing that their loved ones had not fallen in vain and that the memory of the victims dwells in the hearts of the Israeli people.

“Brothers and sisters, members of the family of bereavement,” said Netanyahu, “on Memorial Day we remember our fallen loved ones, who fell during the

Israeli wars and the acts of terror throughout the years.”

The prime minister's own brother, Yoni, was killed in 1976 while leading an assault force to free Israeli hostages at the Entebbe airport.

“We remember, we weep, and we hurt,” he said. “Each family has its own grief, and the grief felt by every one of us merges with the pain of the entire nation of Israel: pain over the life that has been cut short, pain over the fact that all that is now left is memorial day.

“There is no real remedy and there is no full solace. But there is one deep and fundamental consolation: the knowledge that thanks to those who have fallen, the State of Israel was founded and the Jewish people's stature took a turn for the better. Thanks to them, we live here, forever.”

“May their memories be blessed,” the prime minister concluded.

Memorial Day events began Sunday afternoon in Jerusalem with a ceremony at the building of Yad LeBanim , an association for bereaved families. The

event was attended by the prime minister, Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat and the president of the Supreme Court, Asher Grunis, among others.

“Since our emergence as a people, we have had to fight for our liberty and our existence,” Netanyahu said at the ceremony. “Haters of Israel have exiled us, persecuted us and tried to annihilate the memory of Israel. Even today there are those who threaten to destroy us. They cannot, they will never. We are not belligerent, but if it is destined for us, we will cling to our swords and head into battle.”

Still, he asserted, Israelis’ hands were “extended in peace” to all their neighbors.

Stuart Winer and Joshua Davidovich contributed to this report.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/sirens-bring-nation-to-halt-in-remembrance-of-war-and-terror-victims/>

- **Peres: Peace to prevail by Israel's 70th birthday**

In celebratory Independence Day interview to Ynet, president relays his undying optimism on future of Middle East; says Abbas 'chose peace, displayed courage'

Attila Somfalvi

President Shimon Peres has no intention of continuing on to an additional term. Although rumors are spreading, Peres has indicated that he will be satisfied with the seven years the law has granted him as president. "I received seven years, and I think that is fair," he said in a special interview to Ynet ahead of Israel's 65th Independence Day.

"I think that the president should be switched, and I have no intention of asking to stay. I think that it is hard to show restraint for so many years, and moreover, everyone knows my opinion. I want to run forward, to return to the new world."

Such is our president: Even prior to his 90th birthday, which he will celebrate in splendor and grandeur, he has no intention of retiring. He still dreams of peace with the Palestinians, of good

relations with the entire Arab world, and is pushing the world and Israeli science in the direction of brain research.

A conversation cannot be conducted with the president without the issue of brain research being mentioned at least five times. The buzz in Washington is that US President Barack Obama decided to allocate millions to brain research in the United States after hearing what Peres had to say on the subject.

With all due respect to the brain, we told Peres that the main problem is peace with the Palestinians. "I think there are no two ways about it, and there will be peace," said the president. "No one can live in the current intermediate situation. But look what is happening: There is no intifada in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, and Hamas is losing public support.

"You ask yourselves when peace will come. I do not know. I have a handless clock. It doesn't matter what time it is, because tomorrow morning you can wake up and see a new reality. No one has any idea, but I do think that by the country's 70-year celebrations, there will be peace. I

want to hope. It is not just optimism," he told Ynet.

Peres believes that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who is considered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a refuser of peace, is actually capable of signing a peace agreement with Israel. According to Peres, "we have already arrived at a line of unprecedented agreements with Abu Mazen (Abbas). His situation has improved because for the first time he has someone to lean on – he has his security-related power, and that is important since political support in the Arab countries comes from the military."

The president added: "I don't believe that the Jordanian army and the Palestinian security forces will agree that Hamas will come and take control over them. Therefore, an anti-Hamas force has been created and I believe that Abu Mazen (Abbas) is strong enough to make serious decisions. He understands that he must decide between terror and peace – there is nothing else. He chose peace and he demonstrated courage...and there is an agreement on how to end the conflict – two states for two nations."

Peres refrains from publicly criticizing Netanyahu . He only broke this rule once, when he truly feared that Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Ehud Barak would lead Israel to a military adventure in Iran.

Regarding the prime minister's stance on settlements, Peres said "my impression is that for Bibi, the settler issue is more important than the settlements; meaning that the people are more important than the area itself,. I am telling you that with a little imagination, we can solve the land issue."

Officially, Jerusalem has said that Israel will not make any gestures towards Abbas to bring him to the negotiation table. No prisoners, no land, nothing.

"We are prepared to do all these things, under the condition that they do it too. For instance, that they recognize the Jewish State or recognize Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley. If they do, there will be change," Peres told Ynet.

Peres is among the Israeli leaders who believe that the Americans will not hesitate to use military force against Iran,

should the diplomatic efforts fail. "The problem today is not if America can, but rather if America will," said the president.

"Just as America developed very good relations with us in the realm of security, it also prepared the option of using force if necessary. I am of those who believe that it will happen if there is no choice. I am convinced, since I know the US president's opinion, but even if I wouldn't have known his opinion I look at the picture – America cannot permit an Iranian victory," the president declared.

Addressing the recent general elections, Peres said the Israeli public said that the time has come to repair the internal situation in Israel."

Peres added that "this is the first government whose foundation is more social than political. The question is if it is possible to make social reforms without peace? I am not sure about that. I don't think that if the housing and food prices are reduced, it will bring peace. No peace has a price – what we will gain socially we will lose politically. In my opinion, we must continue (raising) two banners – one

social and one political. We have no choice."

The president relayed his Independence Day blessings, saying "I want to wish Israel's citizens that the social flag and the political flag will wave simultaneously and promote the issues. I think that this year is the right year – since here, no one can say what will happen within a year – until we know what will happen we have time to cause the right things to happen.

"Pessimists and optimists die in the same manner – they just live life in a different manner and thus, optimistic lives must be lived. As one of the State of Israel's youngsters – I have a license to be optimistic. Most things that seemed in the past like a dream and madness, came to fruition," said Peres.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4368154,00.html>

#### 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Religious extremism worries Tunisians**

Tunisians are voicing concerns over the rise in religious extremism and associated violence.

In the latest incident, salafists on Thursday (April 11th) attacked a police station in Hergla, Sousse governorate, to free a detainee, Tunisia Numerique reported. A 23-year-old was killed in clashes with security services.

A day earlier, radical Islamists in Nabeul attempted to kill the headmaster of the Lycee Menzel Bouzelfa for refusing entry to a student wearing a niqab.

Salafists had been seen at the secondary school making "provocative speeches against the secularists", TAP confirmed.

This was not the first time for religious extremists to attack an educational institution. In March, salafists prevented secondary school pupils from performing the "Harlem Shake" dance in El Kef.

According to a poll published this week, more than 70 per cent of Tunisians are concerned about the rise in religious extremism.

Young adults (65.1 per cent) are the most worried over religious extremism, and women were more worried than men, the Al Maghreb/Sigma survey found.

"Radicalism gets worse every day in Tunisian society," secondary school student Wajdi Hamraoui said. "These people don't believe in freedom and the right to differ. They're a real threat."

"This is a danger to the state, social peace, tourism and investments," agreed teacher Mohsen Dlisi agreed. "We're under continuous pressures and restrictions because they want to push the country to apply sharia."

In addition to using violence, some radical groups try to spread their ideas through accusations of kufr, housewife Souad Oueslati said.

"We now fear them and worry for our future," she said. "They are present everywhere and intervene in everything. They may commit worse acts if we don't put an end to this."

Mona Farhat, a student and job seeker, also voiced fears for her country's future.

"Radical groups that use violence as a means to exclude those who have different opinions represent a threat, especially as the country is in a transition," she told Magharebia.

According to professor Hayet Salem, countering religious extremism is the most important challenge facing Tunisians. Citizens see the growth of radical religious groups, their extreme discourse and involvement in several acts of violence, she said.

"All these reasons are enough to sow the seeds of fear in Tunisians and make them worry about their future," she added.

But "extremism" goes both ways, according to Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki

"There are two types of extremism in Tunisia: religious and secular," Marzouki told Deutsche Welle last month.

"[S]ecular extremists...get angry whenever they hear about the Islamists or even Islam," he said.

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/a-wi/features/2013/04/12/feature-01](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a-wi/features/2013/04/12/feature-01)

- **Tunisia, Algeria crack down on terrorists**

By Walid Ramzi in Algiers for Magharebia  
– 11/04/2013

Algeria and Tunisia are closing in on terrorists along their shared border.

Tunisian Interior Minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou on Tuesday (April 9th) said that joint security operations were under way against "a terrorist group consisting of 11 terrorists based in a mountainous area in El Kef".

"They are besieged by the army and guards from the Tunisian side and by the gendarmes from the Algeria side," he said in a press conference following "5+5 Dialogue" session in Algiers.

This was the first time an official revealed that there were joint operations as well as security and intelligence co-ordination between the two countries.

"Countering terrorist threats requires high-level security co-ordination and

sharing of information on the movements of terrorist groups along the border strip," former military officer Taher Ben Thamer told Magharebia.

"Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has openly said that it wants to set up rear bases in Tunisia and Libya that may be used to secure weapons and train new fighters," he noted.

He added that it was "in Algeria's interests to put its two-decade long counterterrorism experience at the disposal of authorities in neighbouring countries".

Ben Thamer noted that the "on-going security operation along the border" was the start of implementation of the Ghadames agreement.

During the January meeting, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia agreed to adopt a raft of new border patrol measures to counter arms struggling and repel terrorists.

"All agencies concerned in the three countries need to co-ordinate in order to preserve their security and stability," he added.

Tunisian ambassador to Algeria Mohamed Nejjib Hachana confirmed in a press conference last week that security co-operation between the two states to secure the border was functioning at the highest level.

He described the co-operation between the two countries as "a strong ring of our bilateral relations".

He added that relations between the two countries were witnessing unprecedented harmony, especially in security co-ordination.



For months now, Tunisia has been dealing with a severe security situation and has dismantled several terrorist networks, arrested armed gangs and seized military equipment and ammunition in several areas across the country.

Since last March, Tunisian security forces have launched search operations with Algeria in border areas suspected of harbouring militants.

The Tunisian government also formed crisis cells to track down terrorists on the border with Algeria and Libya and terrorists based in mountainous areas. The operation targets elements from the radical salafist movement and gangs that recruit Tunisian youth and send them for jihad in Syria.

Parallel with the security co-operation, officials in the two countries are discussing previous counterterrorism experiences.

Algerian presidential security advisor Kamel Rezzag-Bara last week presented his country's counterterrorism experience to Tunisian security experts at a meeting organised by the Tunisian National Defence Institute.

"Security co-ordination between Algeria and Tunisia needs more procedures and decisions to counter security threats, as well as practical measures to enhance checkpoints, run joint patrols and create

units with rapid intervention capabilities," said Kamal Hadeif, a journalist specialising in security affairs.

He added that dealing with terrorist groups "according to the traditional military pattern was futile".

Effective counter terrorism operations "requires rapid intervention to target them, and therefore, a unified security centre needs to be created to lead military operations on the border", he said.

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/04/11/feature-01](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/04/11/feature-01)

- **Mediterranean states adopt joint security strategy**

By Walid Ramzi in Algiers and Jemal Oumar in Nouakchott for Magharebia – 10/04/2013

Interior ministers of the ten Mediterranean countries on Tuesday (April 9th) proposed ways to co-operate in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and illegal migration.

Meeting in Algiers for a "5+5 Dialogue" session, Algeria, Libya, Morocco,

Mauritania, Tunisia, Spain, France, Italy, Malta and Portugal discussed a "comprehensive" approach based on the rule of law, social justice and conflict resolution.

The two-day gathering ended with a call to improve border controls and "prohibit wherever possible...the payment of ransom to terrorists groups... in order to dry up the sources of terrorism financing".

The ministers also emphasised the importance of "uniting efforts to combat cybercrime as an engine for the spread of terrorism".

Algerian Interior Minister Dahou Ould Kablia, who had insisted on the body's anti-ransom position, told his peers that international efforts to dry up the sources of terrorist financing had "forced criminal groups to look for other ways" to fund their activities, including kidnappings.

Ould Kablia reiterated Algeria's rejection of negotiating with terrorists. The response to the In Amenas gas plant attack last January was intentionally strong, he said, in order to prevent similar attacks in the future.

"Any terrorist who wants to attack Algeria has only two options: surrender or death," he said.

For his part, Libyan Interior Minister Ashour Shuwail lauded the security co-ordination between his country and Algeria in securing the border, which he said "has produced major results".

Shuwail said that Libya was "not a source of danger", adding that the situation along the border was "largely controlled, thanks to co-operation with neighbouring countries".

Tunisian Interior Minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou also noted recent security co-ordination with Algeria to combat terror group activity near the border.

Meanwhile, Moroccan Interior Minister Mohamed Laenser reiterated a strong desire to strengthen bilateral relations between his country and Algeria.

"One of the most important developments in this meeting is that it brought together Algeria and Morocco at the same table,"

Mauritanian journalist Zain Al-Abidin Ould Mohamed said.

"It should make them feel that security challenges must be above all other considerations," Ould Mohamed added.

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/04/10/feature-01](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/04/10/feature-01)

- **Hosni Mubarak arrives at court**

Ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak arrives at court to hear if judges have accepted an application calling for his release from prison

Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak has arrived at court to hear if he will be released from prison.

Defence lawyer Fareed El-Dib submitted a memorandum stating his client had already spent two years in provisional detention, which is the maximum allowed under Egyptian law.

Hosni Mubarak was arrested on 12 April 2011.

On 7 April, Prosecutor-General Talaat Abdullah announced Mubarak would be detained for an additional 15 days pending investigations into new charges related to the illegal use of state funds.



Last June, Mubarak received a life sentence for failing to protect peaceful protesters during the January 25 Revolution, but was granted a retrial in January due to procedural irregularities in the initial trial.

The judge overseeing the retrial recused himself on Saturday and referred the case to the Cairo Appeal Court.

Also facing retrial for their role in the killing of protesters during the revolution are former interior minister Habib El-Adly, and six of his aides.

Since his detention in April 2011, the ousted president has complained of

health problems and has been moved back and forth from the hospital at Tora Prison to Maadi Military Hospital.

On Saturday, Prosecutor-General Abdullah requested that Maadi Military Hospital transfer Mubarak back to Tora Prison hospital if his health permits.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/69262/Egypt/Politics-/Hosni-Mubarak-arrives-at-court.aspx>

- **Libyan arms controlled by non-state actors: UN**

UN Security Council sounds the alarm that weapons are spreading from Libya to other regional territories

The proliferation of weapons from Libya has continued at a worrying rate and spread into new regional territories, such as West Africa, the Levant and the Horn of Africa, the UN Security Council reveals in a report published on 9 March.

The report added that most "Libyan stockpiles" remained under the control of non-state actors as the state security apparatus is currently being reconstructed

following of the ouster of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011.

"Cases of illicit transfers from Libya, both proven and under investigation include trafficking by land and sea to more than 12 countries. Illicit flows from the country are fuelling existing conflicts and enriching the arsenals of a range of non-State actors in the region and beyond," the UN document stated.

The Security Council reached their conclusions after sending a panel of experts to assess the situation in the domestically-turbulent North African state. The information was gathered from UN member states, regional organisations and individuals after the panel visited almost 15 states and travelled to Libya 10 times.

Libyan Prime Minister Ali Zeidan asked the UN Security Council on 27 February to lift an embargo on arms imports to Libya, according to AFP.

"At my meeting next week with the UN Security Council president, I will discuss the question of lifting the embargo,"

Prime Minister Ali Zeidan had revealed in anticipation to the official news agency.

"The issue will be discussed in all its aspects," he said after a meeting on efforts to rebuild the Libyan armed forces attended by Defence Minister Mohammed al-Barghati, chief of staff Yussef al-Manghush and several officers.

The Security Council imposed the embargo at the start of the 2011 uprising to protect the civilian population from Muammar Gaddafi's forces.

Libya has since been increasingly insecure, however, and authorities are struggling to form a new army as militias control large swathes of territory.

In mid-December, the authorities decided to seal off Libya's long and porous borders with Algeria, Niger, Sudan and Chad, declaring the south of the country a closed military zone.

The report mentioned that a number of brigades have now joined the Libyan army or "have links with formal security forces," ranging from a reallocation of resources under a more formal mandate or being

assigned as "auxiliaries" in areas in which government forces have no presence.

However, the report argued that "most brigades remain in control of their own weapons."

The Security Council called for "further development" in efforts exerted by regular and non-state forces to control and manage weapons.

"While international partners, including UNSMIL, are supporting crucial efforts to secure weapons storage, these efforts are conducted only in certain parts of the country," the Security Council noted.

Meanwhile, the report described the security situation on the borders as the "greatest challenge" for the government as they are "long are difficult to control."

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/8/69257/World/Region/Libyan-arms-controlled-by-nonstate-actors-UN.aspx>

- **Egypt to try Brotherhood members accused of torture**

Two Muslim Brotherhood members in northern Egypt have been ordered to

stand trial on charges of detaining and torturing students during a protest against the president the group propelled to power.

The charges are a rare acknowledgement of the alleged role that some of the president's supporters have had in attacks on his opponents.

The U.S. State Department suggested this month that Egypt was selectively prosecuting those accused of insulting the government while ignoring or playing down attacks on anti-government demonstrators.

Opponents of Mursi also accuse him of trying to dominate state institutions such as the judiciary. The president has said he is working to rid the government of corrupt remnants from the era of Hosni Mubarak, ousted by a popular uprising in 2011.

The prosecutor's office in Damanhour said on Sunday the men were accused of detaining and beating the students in November at the Brotherhood office in the Nile Delta city during clashes between

opponents of Mursi and his Islamist supporters.

The clashes in Damanhour were part of a wave of protests and violence set off by Mursi's decree in November to temporarily expand his powers and prevent court challenges to his decisions.

The crisis triggered by Mursi's decree deepened the divisions in Egyptian society, mainly between the increasingly empowered Brotherhood and its allies and other groups that fear what they see as autocratic tendencies of the Islamist group.

The prosecutor's office referred to case to trial on Saturday, court officials said. It was not immediately clear when the trial would take place.

Brotherhood officials in Cairo were not immediately available for comment.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/69248/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-to-try-Brotherhood-members-accused-of-tortur.aspx>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

### • UN envoy meets with Hezbollah official

The UN's special coordinator to Lebanon met Monday with Hezbollah International Relations Department chief Sayyed Ammar Moussawi Monday to discuss developments in Lebanon and the region.

Derek Plumbly spoke about the crisis in neighboring Syria, expressing his concern about the shelling from Syria that claimed the lives of two Lebanese in the Beqaa on Sunday, according to a statement issued by his office.

Plumbly reiterated his and UN Security Council's support for Lebanon's "territorial integrity and sovereignty" and the need for all parties to "respect Lebanon's policy of dissociation and the Baabda Declaration."

Hezbollah has been accused of fighting on the side of the Syrian regime against Syrian rebels, which would be a violation of the Baabda Declaration agreed on in 2012 between Lebanon's parties to avoid entanglements in foreign crises.

The Shiite party has acknowledged that its members living in Syrian villages on the border with Lebanon have taken part in battles against "armed groups" in self-defense. However, it refuses to discuss allegations by Syrian rebels that it has sent fighters from Lebanon to bolster the forces of its ally, Syria's President Bashar al-Assad.

Plumbly also "welcomed the consensus over the designation of Prime Minister-designate Tamam Salam" and encouraged the formation of a new government "as soon as possible."

Regarding the current battle over a new electoral law, Plumby expressed hope that an agreement could be reached soon "in accordance with Lebanon's constitutional requirements."

Lebanon is awaiting the formation of a new government after Najib Miqati announced his resignation last month citing differences within his cabinet over electoral and security issues.

Salam held talks last week with the country's parliamentarians and consulted

with them over the shape of the government that he will attempt to form.

Derek Plumbly spoke about the crisis in neighboring Syria, expressing his concern about the shelling from Syria that claimed the lives of two Lebanese.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/un-envoy-meets-with-hezbollah-official>

- **Source to NOW: PSP hurdles obstructing cabinet's birth**

The formation of the new Lebanese cabinet has been hit by obstacles imposed by the Progressive Socialist Party, a March 14 source told NOW.

"President [Michel Suleiman] advised Prime Minister-designate [Tammam Salam] not to go ahead with a 'de facto' cabinet if PSP leader MP Walid Jumblatt would not accept it and as long as [Jumblatt's] parliamentary bloc would not grant it its vote of confidence," the source told NOW on Monday.

It added that Suleiman will not sign the cabinet formation decree if Tammam went ahead with such a cabinet makeup,

“since the former wants to pay Jumblatt back after he stood by the presidency during crucial times.”

“The cabinet formation issue has hit a wall,” the source added.

“Salam, however, is dealing with the issue calmly, wisely, and he will refuse to link the cabinet formation question with that of a pre-agreement on the electoral law issue.”

“He might decide to form a cabinet that Hezbollah cannot refuse and which will include names that enjoy the support of all sides.”

Regarding the PSP leader’s position as a king-maker, the source said that Jumblatt would hold on to the promise he made to Hezbollah not to accept a government to which Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah objects.

“He wants to reassure Hezbollah, but his position regarding the Syrian regime is well known.”

The source also told NOW that the March 8 forces, which dominate the cabinet of

caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati, were requesting representation within the new cabinet that reflects its size in parliament.

“Salam refused that,” it added.

“Hezbollah will request that the demands of [his March 8 ally] Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun be met, especially regarding preserving the ministerial position of Energy Minister Gebran Bassil.”

Lebanon is awaiting the formation of a new government after Miqati announced his resignation last month citing differences within his cabinet over electoral and security issues.

PM-designate Salam held talks last week with the country’s parliamentarians and consulted with them over the shape of his new government.

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<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/nownews/psp-hurdles-obstruct-cabinets-birth>

- **FPM official: Jumblatt's interests go against Christians'**

Change and Reform bloc MP Alain Aoun said that Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt can only secure parliamentary seats for his party at the expense of Lebanon's Christians.

"The problem with Jumblatt is that he cannot maintain [himself] in the equation unless [it was] at the expense of the Christians' just representation in the Mount Lebanon [district]," Aoun told Al-Liwaa newspaper in comments to be published on Monday.

Meanwhile, the Free Patriotic Movement official said that if the Future Movement proposes a solution to "rectify the Christians' representation," it would be a "big step towards reestablishing good relations between the [two parties]."

The March 8 lawmaker later tackled the electoral law issue, reiterating his party's utter refusal of holding the upcoming parliamentary elections under the auspices of the current 1960 law.

"On May 19, the MPs will have two options: either agree on a new [electoral]

law, or vote on the Orthodox proposal as an [alternative] to the 1960 law," Aoun noted.

On Wednesday, Lebanon's parliament voted to extend election deadlines until May 19 as the scheduled June 9 parliamentary elections loom closer.

Lebanon's president and premier had signed in March a decree to hold the elections on June 9, which would see the vote held under the auspices of the 1960 law if no new law is adopted. However, many parties fiercely objected to the adoption of the 1960 law.

The electoral law deadlock was one of the reasons that prompted Speaker Nabih Berri to call for a parliamentary session to convene on Wednesday in order to amend the upcoming elections' deadlines, including candidacy applications, withdrawal of candidacies and the election date.

Elsewhere, the FPM parliamentarian echoed his party's advocacy for the new Premier-designate Tammam Salam to form a "political government" in which all parties would be represented.

However, Salam said on Wednesday that the new government “cannot be a national unity government or a political one,” after he held talks with the country’s MPs for the second day running concerning the formation of the cabinet that will oversee the elections.

Jumblatt cannot maintain himself in the equation unless it was at the expense of the Christians’ just representation in the Mount Lebanon district.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/fpm-official-jumblatts-interests-against-christians>

## 6. SYRIA

- **Syria’s jihadist front**

Al-Qaeda’s messages raise more doubts in the West

“Let your fight be in the name of Allah and with the aim of establishing Allah's sharia [law] as the ruling system. Do all that you can so that your holy war yields a jihadist Islamic state.” These words, spoken by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, were meant for jihadists fighting the Assad

regime across Syria. The video message posted online last Sunday had immediate echoes in Iraq and Syria.

The leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also announced that jihadist group Jabhat al-Nusra, which has been fighting alongside the Syrian armed opposition against Assad regime loyalist forces, is part of his network. The head of Jabhat al-Nusra pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri in an audio message released yesterday, but distanced his group from claims it was part of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

The messages were only stating the obvious, according to analysts, but they caused quite a stir among Syrian opposition factions and raised new concerns from Western governments that had been considering arming the Syrian rebels.

Jabhat al-Nusra was formed by Syrian nationals who were once part of Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi’s circle of jihadists that followed him in exile to Herat, Afghanistan, and back to Iraq after the invasion in 2001. The group’s leader, Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani, presented himself

as a veteran of al-Qaeda in Iraq and made no secret that he fought for the Islamic State of Iraq. His name hints that his origins are in the occupied Golan Heights.

The group has never hidden its al-Qaeda links, but have also never been this vocal about it. According to Dr. Alan Mendoza, Executive Director of the international affairs think tank The Henry Jackson Society, said that the statements made by the three al-Qaeda leaders are meant “to make [the West] very suspicious about the Syrian opposition.” He further explained that “the question that comes to one’s mind is ‘who are we actually supporting.’” For Mendoza, the series of messages and videos are a public relations stunt meant to discourage Western countries like France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which have shown interest in arming the Syrian rebels.

“I think they want to influence this debate about interventionism. They are not supporting Western intervention, we’ve always known that. The liberal and democratic forces in the opposition are likely to be the beneficiaries of any Western foreign intervention. They probably want to cause as much confusion

as they can in the Western minds. The West has been battling al-Qaeda for the past 12 years and the message is that ‘we intend to battle you for another 6 or 8 years in Syria,’” Mendoza said.

The statements coming from al-Qaeda leaders caused a stir in the Syrian National Coalition. “The Local Coordination Committees in Syria completely reject the statement by [Ayman al-]Zawahiri in which he called for the establishment of an Islamic state in Syria,” said the LCC, a network of activists on the ground. The LCC made no mention of Jabhat al-Nusra's statement, while debate rages among activists over whether the powerful jihadists should be recognized as a legitimate part of Syrian revolutionary forces.

According to Ghassan Yassin, a member of the Syrian National Coalition based in Aleppo, the statements made by both Jabhat al-Nusra leadership and the Iraqi al-Qaeda are worrisome for the rest of the Syrian opposition. “The timing of this statement was very bad,” he told NOW. “Al-Qaeda never fought against regimes, it always had its own agenda. Al-Qaeda represents neither the revolution, nor the

Syrian people. The Syrian people do not sympathize with Jubhat al-Nusra. We are religious, not fanatic. This is not part of our culture,” he pointed out.

Yassin also said that there is no official cooperation between the Syrian National Coalition and the Jabhat al-Nusra on the military level. “But we cannot deny that JN had many victories against the regime. [Their number] accounts for 10 percent of the Free Syrian Army, and they do not cooperate. We have been asking them for help at the humanitarian level [in Aleppo] and they also did not cooperate. They seem to work independently,” Yassin explained.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s Bassil Haffar, also a member of the Syrian National Coalition, also said the exchange of statement between Jawlani and al-Baghdadi “do not benefit the Syrian revolution at all.” However, he said he doesn’t believe that Jawlani is in any way related to Jabhat al-Nusra. “He is just the representative of one of the many jihadist movements in Syria. The National Coalition and Jawlani did not cooperate in the past,” Haffar stressed.

Yassin doesn’t believe that there would be a military clash between the Free Syrian Army and the al-Qaeda affiliated jihadists, but he expects a political clash. “The international community needs to support the FSA more now, because we have two fights: one against the regime and one against the fundamentalism,” Yassin said.

Yara Chehayed contributed reporting and translating.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/syrias-jihadist-front>

- **Lebanon officials hold security meeting amid Syria shelling**

Lebanon’s top political and security officials held an emergency meeting at the Baabda Presidential Palace to discuss measures to be taken following a fatal Syrian border shelling.

“What is requested is for the foreign ministry to send a memorandum to the Arab League regarding the border violations,” Lebanon’s Social Affairs Minister Wael Abu Faour said following the meeting between President Michel Suleiman, caretaker Prime Minister Najib

Miqati and the country's top security officials.

"The foreign ministry will therefore make the necessary contacts in order to make all sides step up to their responsibilities."

The minister also said that the Lebanese security forces have undertaken the required measures to protect the border.

The meeting in Baabda came as a response to the killing on Sunday of two Lebanese citizens in border towns in Hermel after missiles originating from Syrian territory hit the area.

Two more shells were fired on Monday from Syria hitting the Beqaa's Al-Qasr.

Syrian shells have frequently landed on Lebanese towns and villages near the Lebanese-Syrian border during the course of the past months, causing casualties as well as material damage.

Tension along the Lebanese-Syrian border has generated fears of a spillover of the violence gripping Syria where an armed anti-regime uprising has been raging since March 2011.

The Lebanese security forces have undertaken the required measures to protect the border.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonnews/lebanon-officials-hold-security-meeting-amid-syria-shelling>

- **Syria Islamist brigades to Al-Nusra: Who are you to proclaim yourself as leaders?**

Decision by head of Al-Nusra Front to pledge allegiance to Qaeda prompts unprecedented criticism from Syria's Islamist rebel brigades.

A decision by the head of the jihadist Al-Nusra Front to pledge allegiance to Al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri has prompted unprecedented criticism from some of Syria's Islamist rebel brigades.

Until now, rebels had sought to bury their differences with Al-Nusra, reluctant to jeopardise ties with a force that is militarily superior to most of the country's rebel factions.

But an announcement this week by Al-Qaeda in Iraq, claiming Al-Nusra as part of

its network, and a pledge of allegiance from Al-Nusra's chief to Zawahiri have prompted rare direct and public criticism.

"When we in Syria launched our jihad (holy war) against the sectarian regime... we did not do so for the sake of any allegiance to a man here or another there," the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front, an umbrella group of rebel brigades, said in a statement on Thursday.

It criticised the announcement from Al-Qaeda in Iraq, accusing the group of seeking to "impose a state on us without consulting us, led by an emir we did not choose or even hear of except through media outlets."

"Pledging allegiance to someone who does not understand our reality does not serve our people or nation," the group added.

Other more hardline rebel movements, including the powerful Salafist Ahrar al-Sham brigade which fights with the Syrian Islamic Front umbrella group, have been less willing to criticise Al-Nusra publicly.

But activists say the two groups have had strained relations, and the so-called "ideological godfather" of the Syrian Islamic Front criticised Al-Nusra's decision to pledge allegiance to Al-Qaeda.

"We protect the principles of Islam like the Islamic state, fighting in the name of God and his prophet Mohammed, Islamic law," Abu Baseer al-Tartusi said in a televised interview.

"But all reference to certain names that create a strong reaction around the world against the Syrian people must be avoided," he said.

"You do not need to say that you belong to this name, or that I'm fighting for this banner... when you know that this will hurt the Syrian people and help the tyrant," he added, referring to President Bashar al-Assad.

Aron Lund, an expert on Syria's insurgency, said Al-Nusra's pledge of allegiance to the non-Syrian Zawahiri could backfire on the ground, where rebels are already suspicious of foreign fighters among Al-Nusra's ranks.

"This is a major public relations issue. Al-Nusra's own hardcore sympathisers may be happy about the allegiance to al-Zawahiri, but it may become more difficult for Al-Nusra to recruit new sympathisers," Lund said.

Tensions between Al-Nusra and Islamist rebels have already boiled over once in the aftermath of the capture of Raqa, the first provincial capital to fall to opposition fighters.

In Tal al-Abyad in Raqa province, members of the Islamist Farouq brigade and other opposition fighters clashed with Al-Nusra for control after the withdrawal of regime troops.

Activists and observers have long warned that if the Assad regime falls, a battle between Al-Nusra and other rebel groups could follow. But Lund said the fighting in Raqa showed such conflict could erupt even before a government ouster.

"Raqa proves that day may be closer. With the regime out of the way, the battle shifted almost immediately," he said.

The latest developments "suggest to Syria's Islamists that Al-Nusra wants to go from the status of one military rebel force among others to the political leader of the uprising," Thomas Pierret, an expert on Islamism in Syria, said.

"This is obviously unacceptable to them," the other groups, he added.

"For the first time, the Islamists have a tangible criticism to make on the place of Al-Qaeda in Syria," said Pierret, a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh.

"It can be summarised as: 'Who are you to proclaim an Islamic state when Assad hasn't yet fallen, and especially, who are you to proclaim yourself as leaders?'"

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=58113>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

### • Kuwait silences opposition leader with 5 year jail

Barrak jailed for five years for 'insulting' Kuwait's emir, judge refuses requests to hear defence witnesses.

KUWAIT CITY - A Kuwaiti court on Monday sentenced main opposition leader and former MP Mussallam al-Barrak to five years in prison after he was convicted of insulting the emir, an AFP correspondent said.



"The court has sentenced the defendant Mussallam al-Barrak to five years in prison with immediate effect," said judge Wael al-Atiqi.

Barrak was convicted of making statements deemed offensive to the ruler of the oil-rich Gulf state, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, at a public rally on October 15.

He was detained for four days in late October and released on bail. He is also facing trial on several other counts including charges of storming parliament and taking part in protests.

On April 8, his defence team walked out of court after the judge refused requests to hear defence witnesses.

Barrak had asked Atiqi to postpone the trial until he finds a new lawyer but the judge refused and insisted he would issue the verdict on Monday.

Several opposition tweeters and former MPs have been sentenced to jail terms on charges of insulting the emir.

Kuwait's opposition has been staging protests to demand the dissolution of parliament elected last December on the basis of an electoral law that had been amended by the emir.

The opposition claims that the change is illegal and is aimed at electing a rubber stamp parliament.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=58122>

- **Saudi feared religious police storm Al Janadriyah UAE pavilion**

Member of Saudi religious police objects to presence of Emirati singer Aryam in her country's pavilion, fights with visitors.

RIYADH - A member of the Saudi feared religious police, known as Mutawa, stormed the UAE pavilion at National Festival for Heritage and Culture, also known as Al Janadriyah, but was forced out by the Gulf Kingdom's national guards.

The incident took place when the Mutawa member objected to the presence of the Emirati singer Aryam in her country's pavilion.

A brief U-Tube film showed several guards surround the member of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice before they escorted him out of the pavilion at the annual festival in the Saudi capital Riyadh.

The Saudi Arabic language daily Sabq, which published the film, said the Commission members went into the UAE stand to protest some of its contents but was forced to leave by national guards who are in charge of security at the week-long festivities.

"The national guards chased the Commission member into the UAE stand, grabbed him and forced him out to the applause of scores of visitors, mainly women," the paper said without giving further details.

Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Abdallaziz, Governor of the Riyadh province, ordered an investigation into the incident.

Speaking of her participation in Al Janadriyah, Aryam said, "I didn't sing. I just greeted the Saudi audience with a bouquet from the Emirati folklore. My participation didn't exceed 20 seconds, and I was not accompanied by a band."

She added in remarks published in the Saudi daily Al Asharq, "I respect our Arab Gulf customs and traditions."

The United Arab Emirates' pavilion witnessed large crowds of visitors after the inauguration of the Festival.

The Women Market has lured families who have come to find out about the Emirati handicrafts, made by creative Emirati hands. Visitors also flocked to the UAE's Information Desk to become

acquainted with tourist destinations in the UAE and get instruction leaflets that are aimed at helping them when they travel to the UAE.

The families enjoyed the folklore bands performances in Al Ittihad yard inside the pavilion that was raised on a three-dimensional form, 50% the real size of Al Hosn Palace in Abu Dhabi.

The pavilion's goals are to shed light on the important phases of the UAE's history, and put emphasis on the Emirati heritage so as to reflect the different aspects of the rich traditional life in the country.

According to the visitors, the success of the UAE's pavilion at Al Janadriyah is due to Emiratis' ability to present the country's legacy with its values and originality.

This year's Emirati participation in Al Janadriyah, prepared under the supervision of the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), is considered as one of the biggest since the launch of the Festival.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=58106>

- **Gulf states voice concerns over nuclear implication of Iran's Bushehr quake**

GCC countries urge IAEA to send specialised technical team to inspect Bushehr nuclear plant, investigate potential damage.

Bushehr nearly 90 kilometers away from quake's epicentre

RIYADH - The Gulf Cooperation Council on Sunday called for international inspectors to be sent to Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant over concerns of possible radiation leaks after an earthquake hit the area.

The body demanded the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "send a specialised technical team to inspect the Bushehr nuclear plant and investigate potential damage", GCC chief Abdullatif al-Zayani told an emergency meeting of top Gulf officials.

A 6.1 magnitude quake hit Iran on Tuesday at a depth of 12 kilometres (7.5 miles), in the area of Kaki, according to the Iranian Seismological Centre.

Zayani said the earthquake would "sound alarm bells over the safety of a nuclear plant situated in an area with high seismic activity," urging Iran to commit to international safety standards.

Zayani warned officials at the meeting in Riyadh of the "deep concern among GCC states and the international community about the potential risk that any damage to Iran's nuclear plant could cause radiation leaks."

GCC states had already "warned that radiation leaks from Bushehr plant could have damaging effects on the natural environment in the Gulf region," he said.

The quake killed 37 people and injured 850 others, Iranian authorities said, and was felt in nearby Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Iran said it informed the IAEA there had been no damage to the nuclear power plant in Bushehr, nearly 90 kilometers (55 miles) northwest of the earthquake's epicentre.

Iran's atomic chief Fereydoon Abbasi Davani said that the power plant was not

operational when the quake struck as it was "under maintenance", Iranian media reported.

The Bushehr plant has yet to become fully operational, as its construction has suffered a number of delays and setbacks.

Iran's nuclear drive has put it at loggerheads with the West and Israel, who suspect the country of developing atomic weapons. Tehran has repeatedly denied the claims and insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=58112>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

### • **Two US-led Italian soldiers wounded in Afghan bomb blast**

Press TV

April 14, 2013

Two Italian soldiers have been injured in a roadside bomb explosion in Afghanistan's western province of Herat, Press TV reports.

The attack was carried out on Sunday when an Italian military convoy hit the bomb in Shindand district of the province.

The Taliban militants claimed responsibility for the attack and said it was part of their 'spring offensive' against the foreign forces in Afghanistan.

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) also confirmed the attack, but it did not provide further details.

The Taliban militants mostly use improvised explosive devices including roadside bombs against foreign forces, Afghan troops and civilians.

On Saturday, the militants also claimed responsibility for a rocket attack on the biggest US military base in Nangarhar Province, eastern Afghanistan.

The militants also attacked an Afghan army outpost in Kunar Province near the eastern border with Pakistan on April 12, killing over a dozen soldiers.

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

offensive removed the Taliban from power, but insecurity remains across the country, despite the presence of thousands of US-led troops.

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

- **Afghan forces kill Taliban key commander**

MAIDAN SHAHR, Afghanistan, April 14 (Xinhua)-- Afghan security forces backed by the NATO-led troops targeted and killed a Taliban key commander Safiullah alias Shafiq in Wardak province 35 km west of Kabul on Sunday, spokesman for provincial administration Ataullah Khogyani said.

"Acting upon intelligence report, the personnel of national security forces backed by the NATO-led forces raided a house in Masoomkhil village of Nurkh district and killed Taliban commander Safiullah alias Shafiq at 10:00 a.m. local time today," Khogyani told Xinhua.

There were no casualties on civilians, the official said, adding that Shafiq was killed alone in the operations.

The elimination of Shafiq is a major setback to the Taliban militants in Wardak province, he said.

Taliban militants fighting the government and NATO-led forces are yet to make comment.

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

- **10 militants killed in Afghan raids: gov't**

KABUL, April 14 (Xinhua) -- Ten Taliban militants have been killed in separate military operations across Afghanistan over the last 24 hours, the country's Interior Ministry said Sunday afternoon.

"Afghan National Police (ANP) supported by the army and the NATO-led coalition forces conducted several cleanup operations in Kunar, Zabul, Uruzgan, Khost, Paktia, Badghis and Helmand provinces over the past 24 hours. As a result 10 armed Taliban were killed and three other armed Taliban were arrested," the ministry said in a statement.

The ALP also found and seized weapons, the statement said.

Figures released by the Afghan Interior Ministry showed a total of 77 militants had been killed and more than 100 others detained during military operations since beginning this month across the country. The militants responded by bombings and armed attacks.

On Saturday night, two Afghan Local Police (ALP) service members were killed and six others were missing following a Taliban attack on an ALP checkpoint in Chigana village, Darzab district in northern province of Jawzjan, the district administrative chief, Rahmattullah Hashar, told Xinhua Sunday.

The official said an investigation was kicked off in to the incident in the province 390 km north of Kabul.

The NATO and U.S.-funded ALP or community police was established in August 2010 to protect villages and districts around the insurgency-hit country where Afghan army and police have limited presence.

The missing cops may have been kidnapped by militants, the official added.

However, unknown sources told local media that an ALP cop had helped facilitate the militants to launch the attack.

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

- **Militants kill 4 people in southern Afghan town**

GHAZNI, Afghanistan, April 14 (Xinhua)-- Anti-government militants raided a house in Ghazni province 125 km south of Kabul Saturday night killing four members of a family and injuring another, a local official said Sunday.

"The armed militants attacked a house in Deyak district last night killing four male members of the family and injuring another, " district governor Fazal Ahmad Tolwak told Xinhua.

He blamed the enemies of peace, a term used by Afghan officials against Taliban outfit, saying the militants by targeting and killing civilians is to terrorize the people.

Taliban militants fighting the government have yet to make comment.

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

- **US violated human rights by killing 17 Afghan civilians: Karzai**

Press TV

April 13, 2013

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said that the United States violated international human rights when its military carried out a deadly airstrike in the eastern province of Kunar.

The Afghan president made the remarks on Saturday after his government's investigation into the April 6 incident raised the Afghan civilian death toll from 11 to 17, including 12 children and four women.

Karzai also stated that foreign troops breached his decree, which barred airstrikes in residential areas, and described the move as "unacceptable."

In addition, the Afghan president ordered his government officials to offer immediate assistance to the families of the victims.

The Afghan government investigators wrote their report after working with 75 tribal elders in the area.

The report said the US strike took place after the Afghan intelligence service came under attack from militants during an operation to arrest two insurgent commanders in the Shigal district of Kunar province.

Americans bombarded houses in the area for hours from the air, according to the report.

It said most of the houses were made out of wood and mud, and caved in during the airstrikes, causing civilian deaths.

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

Washington claims that its airstrikes target militants, but local sources say civilians have been the main victims of the attacks.

The United States and its allies entered the war in Afghanistan in October 2001 as part of Washington's so-called war on terror. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but after more than 11 years, the foreign troops have not been able to establish security in the country.

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- **US trapped in an endless war in Afghanistan: James Jennings**

Interview with James Jennings

Press TV

April 14, 2014

An analyst says despite the astronomical cost of US Afghan presence and the American public and military's opposition to staying in the country, it could end up becoming what President Bush initiated as 'endless war.'

The comment comes as Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said that the United States violated international human rights when its military carried out a deadly airstrike in the eastern province of Kunar.

The Afghan president made the remarks on Saturday after his government's investigation into the April 6 incident raised the Afghan civilian death toll from 11 to 17, including 12 children and four women.

Karzai also stated that foreign troops breached his decree, which barred airstrikes in residential areas, and described the move as "unacceptable."

Press TV has conducted an interview with James Jennings, President of Conscience International, in Atlanta to further discuss this issue.

What follows is an approximate transcription of the interview.

Press TV: Mr. Jennings, despite investigations by such fact finding missions in Afghanistan, the main question is when and how can the perpetrators of such crimes in particular the United States be brought to justice?

Jennings: I think that's a very difficult question because the problem is that the United States has no business whatsoever of bombing in Pakistan. It has no business

in fact being in Afghanistan after so many years of fruitless war.

And what is happening is that these raids by a number of different kinds of drones, we have about five or six different types, some of them are very large and can launch major bombs but they are bombing civilian houses as everybody knows with the pretext or the information, perhaps false information that there are terrorists there.

So in that situation it's obvious that civilians will be killed and this is a an atrocity which should be brought to justice but unfortunately in the world in which we live that's not very likely.

Press TV: At the end of the day will there be a total US withdrawal from Afghanistan because economically it would only incur more costs wouldn't it?

Jennings: Absolutely, the cost is astronomical for each month or each week that the war goes on and the United States is having fiscal difficulties with its own budget it should not be there and the whole idea of keeping a military force in a country because you had some previous

deaths there on the American side is a crazy idea to begin with, to extend the war simply because you have to honor the ones who have already fallen that could lead to what President Bush introduced as an endless war.

There is a great deal of feeling not only in the American population, American Congress but also even in the military that the war in Afghanistan is fruitless and should have been ended long ago.

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

- **Afghan senators criticize security institutions for instability**

By SAYED JAWAD - 14 Apr 2013, 10:12 pm

Khaama Press

Afghan senators on Sunday accused Afghan security institutions for being reckless amid concerns regarding growing violence in the country.

The senators criticized Afghan government's weak policy towards the Pakistan's intelligence (ISI) and Taliban group which has direct impact over the security situation of Afghanistan.

They also criticized Afghan security forces and NATO-led coalition security forces for remaining helpless to bring stability in the country.

Senators Hedayatullah and Belqis said, "There will be no stability in Afghanistan unless the Afghan government does not satisfy Pakistan intelligence (ISI). Pakistan is using al Qaeda and Taliban as tool and therefore there will be no stability in the country unless the main source of violence which is Pakistan's ISI is not satisfied."

They also added, "It is not fair to give credit to the enemies of Afghanistan all the time which will further boost Taliban's stamina over the Afghan security institutions."

The amin agenda of the Afghan senate house on Sunday focused on spring offensive of the militants groups and the senators urged the Afghan government to take necessary steps in this regard.

Afghan senators also decided to summon Afghan security officials in the defense committee to brief the lawmakers regarding the security concerns.

However Afghan interior ministry spokesman said Afghan security forces capabilities are growing each day and are able to counter militants activities despite they are supported by regional intelligence agencies.

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

*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Nebahat Tanrıverdi O Yaşar**. 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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