



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-dışı Aktörler

Relations with the West

Batı'yla İlişkiler



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

30 APRIL 2013

NO: 1592

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. IRAQ..... | 3 |
| • Iraqi politician: There are two ways in front of Iraq An alternative to al-Maliki or regional interference..... | 3 |
| Diyala deputies accused some political blocs of rigging election results..... | 3 |
| • Maliki, Barzani agree on giving security special significance | 4 |
| • Barzani and Maliki meeting to resolve outstanding issues | 5 |
| • Turkmen demand Kurdistan to withdraw Peshmarga | 5 |
| • Oil discovery confirmed in Iraqi-Kurdistan..... | 6 |
| • Iranian FM Calls for Unity among Iraqi Groups..... | 7 |
| 2. IRAN..... | 9 |
| • Iran, Azerbaijan Keen to Expand Bilateral Relations | 9 |
| • Iran's Envoy: Israel's Nuclear Arsenals Threatening Global Peace..... | 10 |
| • Supreme Leader's Speech at Islamic Awakening and Ulema Conference | 11 |
| • Canada's claim on Iran is ridiculous: Iranian lawmaker | 21 |
| • Rafsanjani reluctant to announce intentions for election, son says | 22 |
| • Iran ready to mediate in Nagorno-Karabakh dispute: Larijani..... | 23 |
| • Iran will remain an active IAEA member state, NPT signatory..... | 24 |
| • Turkey to Continue Oil Imports from Iran despite Sanctions..... | 24 |
| 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE | 26 |
| • Israel's 5th Dolphin submarine launched in north Germany | 26 |
| • Following an IAF strike on Gaza terrorist, Netanyahu promises to continue protecting Israelis, respond to attacks..... | 27 |
| • Arab states modify initiative on peace with Israel | 27 |
| • On Labor Day, Unemployment in Palestine Stands at 23%..... | 29 |
| • Settlement Expansion Focus of Dailies..... | 30 |
| • Israel hails Arab League's stance on land swaps | 32 |
| 4. AFRICA and EGYPT | 33 |
| • Al-Qaeda assails government to lure disgruntled Algerians | 33 |
| • Tunisia arrests hundreds in Syria recruit probe | 35 |
| • Fingers pointed after second mass food poisoning at Al-Azhar..... | 36 |
| • Tahrir Imam is free to lead prayers again after court order | 39 |
| • Sunni Associations Counter Visit of Wahhabi Preacher | 40 |
| • Egypt creates a flutter at Geneva nuclear talks | 41 |
| 5. JORDAN and LEBANON..... | 43 |
| • Minister: Hezbollah fanning strife in Bahrain..... | 43 |
| • MPs call for postponing decision to reimpose 16 per cent accommodation tax..... | 43 |
| • Berri and Jumblatt to continue election talks | 45 |
| • Deadly blast rocks central Damascus | 47 |
| 6. SYRIA..... | 49 |



ORSAM

ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ
ÖZGÜR DÜŞÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

| | |
|---|-----------|
| • Syria troops battle militants in Homs..... | 49 |
| • There's no legal basis for striking Syria | 50 |
| • Huge explosion rocks Damascus | 53 |
| 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA..... | 55 |
| • Saudi forces shoot, arrest two activists in Eastern Province..... | 55 |
| • Arab League delegates in Washington to push for Mideast peace talks | 56 |
| • Bahrain Parliament votes to lift MP immunity..... | 57 |
| • Khalifa's UK visit to boost bilateral ties | 58 |
| 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN | 60 |
| • 37 militants killed in Afghanistan within day: gov't | 60 |
| • Gun battle leaves 8 Afghan Taliban fighters dead | 61 |

1. IRAQ

- **Iraqi politician: There are two ways in front of Iraq An alternative to al-Maliki or regional interference**

BAGHDAD / NINA / The President of the Iraqi Foundation for Development and Democracy in Baghdad, Ghassan Attiyah called on Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to step down in order to prevent Iraq from sliding into a civil war.

Al-Attiyah told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / "There are two ways to resolve the crisis, either a regional intervention to change the political situation or the National Alliance offers a candidate to replace al-Maliki."

He added: "Maliki today became a part of the problem rather than a part of the solution. The scene of 2005 on doors in the presence of the government tension speech, which created an extremist sectarian team supported its orientations, against another extremist team and that causes a sectarian tension in Iraqi, which will lead the country to the sectarian war hurts them all, unless a mediator plays a role to calm. "

He explained: "The way in which al-Maliki dealt with the components of the Iraqi people, especially with the demonstrators, led some

provinces to what we see today, which would push the country to dire consequences as a result of these misguided policies."

Attiyah criticized the sectarian polarization that would not allow the moderate forces to play the role of calm among the political forces to get out of the crisis, demanding the political forces to search for a moderate trend in order to play a role in the next phase.

About Haweja events, Attiyah said: "using force by the government was a mistake, as using excessive force is not acceptable by all convention."

Attiyah warned of the possibility of turning Iraq into a Syria version, calling for a more active role of the United Nations and regional countries to prevent it. "

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

Diyala deputies accused some political blocs of rigging election results.

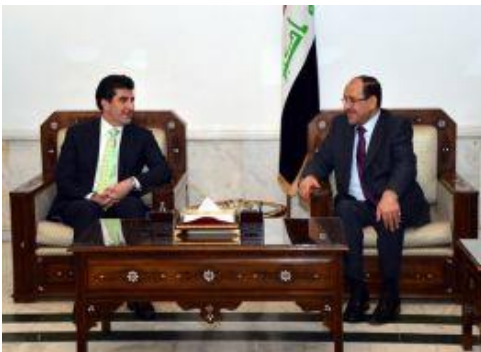
Baghdad/ NINA/--A number of deputies for Diyala province,accused some political blocs of trying rigging election results of the province.

MP Muhammad Al-Khalidi told a press conference that "there is an attempt by some political blocs to change the preliminary results of the elections, and there is certain information about the existence of certain breaches by some blocs to change significantly the election results.

"The same source stressed that the first day of the elections in the special voting witnessed fraud and expelling of observers and staff in Alkhalis district , pointing out that the general vote witnessed burning of polling station in Baquba, despite the fact that the boxes filled of voters cards .

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

- **Maliki, Barzani agree on giving security special significance**



Baghdad (AIN) -The Iraqi Premier, Nouri al-Maliki discussed with the Kurdistan Kurdistan Prime Minister, Najervan Barzani, which arrived to Baghdad on Monday morning, the pending issues between Baghdad and Erbil where they agreed on resolving all the problems.

A statement by Maliki's office reported "Maliki and Barzani agreed on giving the security side all over the country special significance along with ratifying the pending laws such as the oil & gas law."

"The two sides discussed all the pending issues in a friendly atmosphere characterized by good will to resolve the problems where they agreed on giving the security side special attention across the country and enhancing the coordination in this domain."

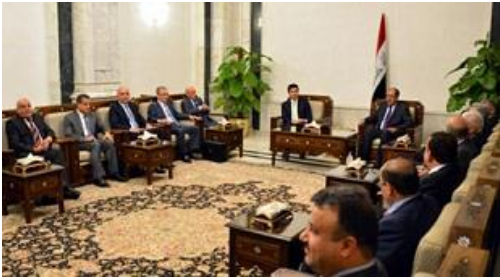
The Kurdish delegation has arrived Baghdad on Monday early morning, where it held meeting with the Iraqi National Alliance at Ibrahim al-Jaafary's office shortly after the delegation's arrival, where they discussed the pending issues between Baghdad government and KRG.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33083:](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=33083)

[maliki-barzani-agree-on-giving-security-special-significance-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.shafaq.com/en/politics/5952-barzani-and-maliki-meeting-to-resolve-outstanding-issues-.html)

- **Barzani and Maliki meeting to resolve outstanding issues**

Shafaq News / State of Law coalition led by Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki considered on Tuesday, the last meeting between President of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has put the final touches to the series of meetings held by political delegations between the two parties to find solutions to outstanding problems.



“The meeting that took place yesterday is the beginning to resolve all outstanding issues between the parties,” A member of the coalition, Saad al-Matlabi told “Shafaq News”.

President of KRG, Nechirvan Barzani arrived on Monday morning, at the head of a senior

Kurdish delegation to Baghdad to resolve outstanding issues with the government.

The National Alliance in the parliament has announced, on Monday, that it agreed with the Kurdish delegation, headed by Barzani on the continuation of the strategic alliance between the “Shiites” and “Kurds” and to engage in a serious dialogue to resolve the outstanding issues between Baghdad and Erbil.

It is worth mentioning that MPs and ministers of Kurdistan Alliance and other Kurdish forces boycotted the parliament and cabinet sessions on the background of voting on current year's budget without compatibility of the Kurdish parties

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/politics/5952-barzani-and-maliki-meeting-to-resolve-outstanding-issues-.html>

- **Turkmen demand Kurdistan to withdraw Peshmarga**

Shafaq News / Turkmen in Kirkuk (240 km north of Baghdad), demanded on Monday, Kurdistan Region to withdraw Peshmarga troops from the areas they entered in after Hawija events.

“Turkmen demand the leadership of Kurdistan Region to withdraw Peshmarga that have been deployed after Hawija events and demanded the central government to allow forming a force of these areas’ people affiliated to the federal ministries,” the head of Turkmen Front MP, Arshad Salehi said in a news conference attended by “Shafaq News”.

“If not responded to our demands we demand to deploy neutral international forces in these areas for fear of imposing Peshmarga forces on Kirkuk , Tuz Khormatu, Diyala and Tal Afar areas,” adding that “Turkmen are waiting for an official position from Hawija protestors “.

Salehi considered “Peshmarga deployment as unconstitutional “.

Peshmarga forces refer to armed Kurdish fighters.

Ministry of Peshmarga in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced, on Saturday that it filled the gaps left by the Iraqi army in the disputed areas in Kirkuk , Diyala and Salahuddin provinces , fearing that armed elements might sneak to these areas, stressing that the goal is to protect all national and religious components in it.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/politics/5950-turkmen-demand-kurdistan-to-withdraw-peshmarga-.html>

• **Oil discovery confirmed in Iraqi-Kurdistan**

A rapid oil appraisal program is under way in the Kurdish region of Iraq following a successful test of a second well, Genel Energy said.

Anglo-Turkish company Genel Energy announced its second test in the Chia Surkh 10 well yielded a sustained preliminary flow rate of 3,200 barrels of oil per day and 8.4 million cubic feet of natural gas.

The test confirms that Chia Surkh is a significant oil discovery, Genel said. Early this month, the company said it reached a test rate of 11,950 barrels of oil per day from its first of five exploration wells in the Chia Surkh discovery area.

Genel Director of Exploration John Hurst said the second test in the Chia Surkh region gives the company reason for optimism.

We will continue with our rapid appraisal and development program, including the first appraisal well now under way and will be evaluating and drilling a number of other prospects we have in the Chia Surkh license, he said in a statement.

The semiautonomous Kurdish government gave Genel permission in January to export crude oil to Turkey by road shipments. Genel is working to convert a natural gas pipeline to facilitate additional oil deliveries.

Oil flow through the 600-mile Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline was disrupted this week when militants attacked the pipeline in Iraq.

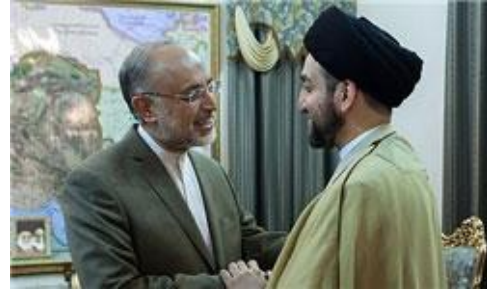
Export restrictions had been in place as a sign of growing frustration with the central Iraqi government over oil laws in the country.

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=4458

- **Iranian FM Calls for Unity among Iraqi Groups**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi in a meeting with Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar al-

Hakim in Tehran underlined the need for unity among Iraq's diverse ethnic groups in a bid to thwart foreign plots.



During the meeting in Tehran on Monday, the Iranian foreign minister said that all Iraqi groups should do their best to prevent foreign intervention in their country through collaborating with each other.

Salehi noted that the Iraqi Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds should join hands to prevent foreigners from achieving their mischievous goals in the Arab country.

Also during the meeting, al-Hakim welcomed Salehi's remarks and described foreign intervention as the cause of Iraq's current difficulties.

Al-Hakim urged understanding among all political groups in Iraq in a bid to help forging unity in the Muslim country.

Last week, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian warned that certain western and regional states which have failed in their plots against Syria are now trying to spark sedition in Iraq.

"Having failed in Syria, foreign sides are now seeking to create sedition in Iraq, whereas this is playing with fire," Amir Abdollahian said, urging the outsiders to act wisely.

He warned foreign sides against inciting violence in Iraq, describing the measure as "playing with fire".

Amir Abdollahian said that Iraq is the land of vigilant and resistant people and leaders. Iraq said earlier that several regional states, including Qatar, have paid \$100 to each participant in protest rallies in al-Anbar province in support of Iraqi Finance Minister Rafia al-Issawi, whose bodyguards have been arrested on terrorism charges.

Iraq's al-Nakhil news agency quoted a security official as saying that after the arrest of Issawi's bodyguards, several groups affiliated to the regional states, specially Qatar, paid huge sums to their sympathizers in Anbar, Salaheddin and Nineveh provinces to stage rallies against the Iraqi government.

Ouraq al-Khalij newspaper also informed that Doha is staunchly supporting Issawi for taking the leadership of Sunni protestors in Iraq.

The paper said Qatari officials had contacted a large number of their agents and hirelings in Iraq in recent days to coordinate the protests, adding that even the mottoes chanted against al-Maliki government have been dictated by Doha.

Earlier this year, an Iraqi legislator said that a number of foreign states are funding and supporting the recent protests and unrests in Iraq's al-Anbar province.

"The goal of the recent protests in Iraq is drowning the country and this plot is orchestrated by the foreign states," Jamal al-Batikh told FNA at the time.

He also cautioned that certain opposition lawmakers joined the plot and entered a regional and international game against Iraq.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107165942>

2. IRAN

• Iran, Azerbaijan Keen to Expand Bilateral Relations

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Head of the Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan Ramiz Mehdiyev in a meeting in Tehran explored avenues for the further expansion of mutual cooperation and bilateral ties.



During the meeting in Tehran on Monday, the Iranian president and the Azeri official underlined the need for bolstering and reinvigorating relations between Tehran and Baku.

During the meeting, President Ahmadinejad pointed to the current status of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, and said, "Undoubtedly, because of the vigilance of the nations and governments of Iran and Azerbaijan, they (enemies)

cannot harm the brotherly ties between the two countries."

The Iranian president noted that the nation and government of Azerbaijan are moving towards progress and the Islamic Republic supports this trend and considers it beneficial for both nations as well as regional nations.

Mehdiyev, for his part, said the Republic of Azerbaijan considers the Islamic Republic as a friendly and brotherly country, and said, "We have to enhance our mutual cooperation and we have many facilities at our disposal for that purpose."

Mehdiyev, heading a high-ranking delegation, arrived in Tehran on Monday to discuss the bilateral and regional developments.

"Mehdiyev's visit takes place at the invitation of Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Saeed Jalili," Iranian Ambassador to Baku Mohsen Pakayeen said on Monday.

Pakayeen noted that during his stay in Tehran, the Azeri official is slated to hold

talks with Jalili and a number of other Iranian officials.

"Mehdiyev's visit to Tehran is an indication of strong will of the two countries' leaders to boost strategic cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan," the Iranian envoy added.

Mehdiyev and Jalili are slated to discuss issues of mutual interest and also regional developments.

Iran has recently enhanced efforts to boost political, economic, security and cultural ties and cooperation with the regional and neighboring countries, specially the Central Asian states.

In October, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad traveled to Baku to attend the 12th Summit of the Economic Cooperation Organization. The summit was held at the Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku.

The Iranian and Azeri presidents met on the sidelines of ECO Summit, where the two leaders underlined the need for rigid efforts to expand bilateral relations and widen mutual cooperation.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107165882>

- **Iran's Envoy: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal Threatening Global Peace**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's Residing Representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Ali Asqar Soltaniyeh warned nations about the threats posed by Israel's nuclear arsenals to global peace and security.

Soltaniyeh made the remarks addressing the second session of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday.

"Allowing Israel to continue to its production of nuclear weapons without any punishment will have serious consequences for regional and global peace and security," the Iranian envoy said.

"Non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are both sides of one coin. Nuclear-armed countries have diverted

the attention of the international community from their constant measures to achieve nuclear weapons under the pretext of non-proliferation," he added.

As a responsible country that has no nuclear weapons and carries out merely peaceful nuclear activities, the Islamic Republic will remain completely committed to NPT objectives.

"We believe that full implementation of the NPT without discrimination plays a fundamental role in promoting international peace and security," the Iranian envoy said.

Soltaniyeh once again renewed Iran's call for nuclear disarmament weapons based on the NPT regulations.

Israel is believed to be the sole possessor of nuclear arms in the Middle East with over 200 ready-to-launch warheads in its stockpile.

Iran, an NPT-signatory, has also called for the removal of all weapons of mass destruction from across the globe.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107165836>

- **Supreme Leader's Speech at Islamic Awakening and Ulema Conference**

TEHRAN (FNA)- The following is the full text of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei's address to the inaugural meeting of the 'Islamic Awakening and Ulema Conference' in Tehran on Monday.

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and greetings be upon our Master, Mohammad al-Mustafa, and upon his immaculate household, chosen companions and those who follow them well, until the Day of Judgment.

I welcome you honorable guests and I ask Almighty and Merciful God to bless this collective effort and make it an effective step towards happiness of Muslims. "Surely He listens and responds."

Today the subject of Islamic Awakening, which you will discuss in this conference, tops the list of the issues of the Islamic world and the Islamic Ummah, an amazing phenomenon that will result in the re-emergence of Islamic civilization - for the Islamic Ummah and then for all of the world - in the not too distant future providing that, with Allah's permission, it stays healthy and continues.

Today what lies in front of our eyes and cannot be denied by any informed and intelligent individual is that the world of Islam has now emerged out of the sidelines of social and political equations of the world, that it has found a prominent and outstanding position at the center of decisive global events, and that it offers a fresh outlook on life, politics, government and social developments. This is considered an important and significant phenomenon in today's world, which is suffering from a deep intellectual and theoretical vacuum after the failure of communism and liberalism. This is the first sign of the political and revolutionary events in North Africa and the Arab region on a global scale, which itself is a harbinger of greater truths that will come to pass in the future.

Islamic Awakening, which speakers in the arrogant and reactionary camp do not even dare to mention in words, is a truth whose signs can be witnessed in almost all parts of the world of Islam. The most obvious sign of it is the enthusiasm of public opinion, especially among young people, to revive the glory and greatness of Islam, to become aware of the nature of the international order of domination and to remove the mask from the shameless, oppressive and arrogant face of the governments and centers that have been pressuring the Islamic and non-Islamic East in their clutches for more than two hundred years and have been exposing nations to their brutal and aggressive thirst for power disguised with the mask of civilization and culture.

The dimensions of this auspicious awakening are widespread and mysterious, but what was witnessed of its immediate outcomes in a few North African countries can make hearts confident about the great and amazing outcomes that will be achieved in the future. Miraculous fulfillment of divine promises is always a hope-inspiring sign that promises the fulfillment of greater

promises. The Quranic account of the two promises that Allah the Exalted gave to the mother of Prophet Moses is an example of this divine tactic. At that difficult moment, when she was ordered to cast her baby in the river in a basket, Allah the Exalted said, "Surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the messengers." [The Holy Quran, Sura al-Qasas, Ayah 7] The fulfillment of the first promise, which was the smaller promise and a cause for happiness for the mother, became the sign of the fulfillment of the promise of prophetic mission, which was far greater and of course, it required long-term suffering, struggle and patience: "So We restored him to his mother that her eye might be refreshed, and that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true..." [The Holy Quran, Sura al-Qasas, Ayah 13] This true promise was the great mission which was fulfilled after many years and it changed the course of history.

Another example is the reminder about the overwhelming power of God to suppress the invaders of the Holy House: in order to encourage His audience through the Holy Prophet to submit to His order, Allah the Exalted makes use of this

example "so let them serve the Lord of this House" [The Holy Quran, Sura Quraysh, Ayah 3] and says, "Did He not cause their war to end in confusion?" [The Holy Quran, Sura al-Fil, Ayah 2] Similarly, in order to raise the spirits of His beloved Prophet and convince him of the truth of the promise "your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased" [The Holy Quran, Sura ad-Dhuha, Ayah 3], Allah the Exalted gives the reminder about the miraculous blessing: "Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? He found you astray and guided you." [The Holy Quran, Sura ad-Dhuha, Ayah 6-7] And there are many such examples in the Holy Quran.

The day when Islam achieved victory in Iran and managed to capture the fort of America and Zionism in one of the most important countries in this extremely sensitive region, those who were wise and quick to learn realized that if they had patience and insight, other victories will come one after another.

The brilliant truths in the Islamic Republic, which are acknowledged by our enemies, have all been achieved in the shade of trust in divine promises, patience,

resistance and asking God for assistance. In the face of temptations by weak people who, during tense times, shout "we are sure to be overtaken," [The Holy Quran, Sura ash-Shuara, Ayah 61] our people have always shouted "by no means, my Lord is with me and soon will He guide me." [The Holy Quran, Sura ash-Shuara, Ayah 62]

Today this is a precious experience that is available to the peoples who have stood up against arrogance and tyranny and have managed to overthrow and shake corrupt governments that are subservient to and dependent on America. Resistance, patience, insight and faith in the divine promise "surely Allah will help him who helps His cause" will pave this path of glory for the Islamic Ummah until it reaches the peak of Islamic civilization.

At this important meeting, which has been attended by a group of religious scholars of the Islamic Ummah from different Islamic countries and denominations, I believe it is appropriate to discuss a few necessary points regarding the issue of Islamic Awakening.

The first point is that the earliest waves of awakening in the countries of this region, which started simultaneously with the entry of the pioneers of colonialism, were mainly caused by religion and religious reformers. The names of outstanding leaders and personalities - such as Sayyid Jamal ad-Din, Muhammad Abduh, Mirza-e Shirazi, Akhund-e Khorasani, Mahmoud al-Hassan, Muhammad Ali, Sheikh Fazlollah, Hajj Agha Noorullah, Abul A'la Maududi and tens of famous, great, mujahid and influential clerics from Iran, Egypt, India and Iraq - have been recorded in history books forever. Similarly, in the contemporary era, the brilliant name of the great Imam Khomeini is shining like a brilliant star at the forefront of the Islamic Revolution. Meanwhile, today and in the past, hundreds of famous religious scholar and thousands of lesser-known religious scholars have played a role in great and small reform movements in different countries. The list of non-cleric religious reformers, such as Hassan al-Banna and Iqbal Lahori, is also long and amazing.

Almost everywhere, clerics and theologians have been the intellectual authority and spiritual support for the people and wherever they have appeared

in the role of guides and pioneers at the time of great developments and have moved forward in the first rows of popular movements in the face of dangers, the intellectual bond between them and the people has been strengthened and they have played a significant role in showing the path to the people. This is as beneficial to the wave of Islamic Awakening as it is unpleasant and distressing to the enemies of the Islamic Ummah, those who bear grudges against Islam and those who are opposed to the rule of Islamic values, and they are trying to take away this intellectual authority from religious strongholds and create new centers for it. They have learned through experience that they can easily reach a compromise with these centers over national principles and values, and this is something that will never happen in the case of pious religious scholars and devoted religious personalities.

This makes the responsibility of religious scholars heavier. Through vigilance and caution and by identifying the enemy's deceptive methods and machinations, they should completely shut the door to infiltration and foil the enemy's plots. One of the greatest calamities is becoming

attracted to the lure of worldly wealth. Exposure to the favors of wealthy and powerful people and being indebted to Taghuts of lust and power are the most dangerous cause of separation from the people and loss of their trust and friendliness. Self-centeredness and thirst for power, which lure weak individuals towards developing an inclination to poles of power, prepare the ground for involvement in corruption and deviation. It is necessary to constantly keep this holy Quranic ayah in mind: "(As for) that future abode, We assign it to those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief and the good end is for those who guard (against evil)." [The Holy Quran, Sura al-Qasas, Ayah 83]

Today in the era of hope-inspiring movements of Islamic Awakening, sometimes certain things are witnessed which on the one hand, show the efforts by the agents of America and Zionism to create unreliable intellectual authorities and which on the other hand, show the efforts by debauched Qaruns to drag religious and pious people towards their poisoned and contaminated activities. Religious scholars and pious men should be extremely vigilant and careful.

The second point is the necessity of delineating a long-term goal for Islamic Awakening in Muslim countries, a noble aim that gives orientation to the awakening of nations and helps them reach a certain point. It is through identifying this particular point that one can prepare a roadmap and specify the medium- and short-term goals in it. This final goal cannot be anything less than creating a brilliant Islamic civilization. All parts of the Islamic Ummah - in the form of different nations and countries - should achieve the civilizational position that has been specified in the Holy Quran. The main and the general characteristic of this civilization is that it should allow human beings to utilize all the material and spiritual capacities that Allah the Exalted has bestowed on them and on the world in order to bring about happiness and transcendence for humanity. The surface structure of this civilization can and should be witnessed in popular government, in the laws that have been extracted from the Holy Quran, in identifying and addressing different needs of humanity, in avoidance of rigidity and reactionary attitudes as well as unwarranted innovation and adulteration, in creating

public welfare and wealth, in establishing justice, in liberation from an economy that is based on special privileges, usury and taking pride in wealth, in promoting human values, in defending oppressed people in the world, and in hard work and innovation. Adopting an Ijtihadi and scholarly outlook on different areas - ranging from humanities to the system of formal education, from economy and banking to technical and technological production, from modern media to art and cinema and to international relations and other areas - are all among the requirements for this civilization-building.

Experience has shown that all of these things are possible and within the capacities of Muslim communities. This outlook must not be treated with haste and pessimism. Being pessimistic about one's capabilities is ingratitude to God's blessings, and neglecting help from God and the laws of creation amounts to slipping into the morass of entertaining "evil thoughts about Allah." [The Holy Quran, Sura al-Fath, Ayah 6] We can break the chain of scientific, economic and political monopolies of the domineering powers and help the Islamic Ummah become the pioneer of restoring the rights

of the majority of nations in the world, which have been dominated by a minority of arrogant powers.

Through religious faith, knowledge, ethics and constant struggle, Islamic civilization can gift advanced thought and noble codes of behavior to the Islamic Ummah and to the entire humanity, and it can be the point of liberation from materialistic and oppressive outlooks and corrupt codes of behavior that form the pillars of current Western civilization.

The third point is that in the movements of Islamic Awakening it is necessary to pay constant attention to the bitter and horrifying experience of following the West in politics, behavior and lifestyle.

In more than a century of following the culture and politics of the arrogant powers, Muslim countries suffered from deadly calamities such as political dependence and humiliation, economic plights and poverty, decline of moral virtues and ethics and shameful scientific backwardness, and this was while the Islamic Ummah enjoyed a glorious history in all of these areas.

This statement must not be interpreted as hostility towards the West. We are not hostile towards any group of human beings because of geographical differences. We have learnt lessons from Ali (greetings be upon him) who describes human beings in this way: "Those who have the same religion as you, they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you." Our complaint against oppression and arrogance and against bullying and transgression is the moral and practical degeneration that has been imposed on our nations by the colonial and arrogant powers. Currently, we can witness the bullying and interference of America and some of its followers in the region in the countries in which the breeze of awakening has turned into the storm of uprisings and revolutions. Their promises must not affect the decisions and actions of outstanding political personalities and the great movement of the people. In this case as well, we need to learn lessons from our experiences: those who pinned their hopes on the promises of America for years and based their behavior and policies on the inclination towards the oppressor did not manage to resolve any

problems of their nations or eliminate an injustice to themselves or to others. By surrendering to America, they did not manage to prevent the demolition of even one single Palestinian home in a territory that belongs to the Palestinians. The politicians and outstanding personalities who are deceived by the bribe or intimidated by the threats of the camp of the arrogant powers and miss the great opportunity of Islamic Awakening should be apprehensive about this divine threat: "Have you not seen those who have changed Allah's favor for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition into hell? They shall enter into it and an evil place it is to settle in." [The Holy Quran, Sura Ibrahim, Ayah 28-29]

The fourth point is that today one of the most dangerous things that threatens the movement of Islamic Awakening is the efforts to foment discord and turn these movements into bloody sectarian, ethnic and national conflicts. Currently, this plot is being seriously pursued by intelligence services of the West and Zionism with the help of petrodollars and bribed politicians from East Asia to North Africa and particularly in the Arab region. And the

money that could have been spent to bring about happiness for mankind is being used to make threats, excommunicate, assassinate, bomb, shed Muslim blood and to kindle the fire of long-lasting grudges. Those who consider the unified power of Islam as an obstacle in the way of their evil goals have come to the conclusion that fanning the flames of conflicts inside the Islamic Ummah is the easiest way to achieve their satanic goal and they have used differences of opinion in Islamic jurisprudence, kalaam, history and hadith - which are natural and inevitable - as a pretext to excommunicate, shed blood and cause fitna and corruption.

A vigilant look at the scene of domestic conflicts clearly reveals the enemy's hands behind these tragedies. These deceptive hands undoubtedly take advantage of the ignorance, prejudice and superficiality that exists in our societies and they add fuel to the fire. The responsibility of religious and political reformers and outstanding personalities is very heavy in this regard.

Currently, Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, Syria, Pakistan, and Iraq and Lebanon are in one

way or another involved in or exposed to these dangerous flames. It is necessary to be extremely careful and to look for a remedy. It would be naïve to think that all of these things are due to ideological and ethnic factors and motives. Propaganda campaigns of the West and dependent and mercenary media in the region pretend that the destructive war in Syria is a Shia-Sunni conflict and they create a safety margin for the Zionists and the enemies of resistance in Syria and Lebanon. This is while the two sides of the conflict in Syria are not Shia and Sunni, rather they are the supporters and opponents of anti-Zionist resistance. Neither the Syrian government is a Shia government, nor is the secular and anti-Islam opposition a Sunni group. The only achievement of the plotters of this calamitous scenario is that they have managed to make use of religious sentiments of simple-minded people to kindle this deadly fire. A look at the scene and those who are involved in it at different levels can clarify the issue for any just individual.

Also, in the case of Bahrain, this wave of propaganda is spreading lies and deception in another way. In Bahrain, the

oppressed majority - who have been deprived of the right to vote as well as other fundamental rights that a nation should enjoy - have risen up to demand their rights. Should this be considered a Shia-Sunni conflict simply because the oppressed majority are Shia and the oppressive secular government pretends to be Sunni? Of course, the European and American colonialists and their friends in the region want to make things appear like this, but what is the truth?

These are the things that call religious scholars and just reformers to careful thinking and sense of responsibility and they make identification of the enemies' goals behind highlighting sectarian, ethnic and partisan differences an obligation for everybody.

The fifth point is that one of the standards for judging whether Islamic Awakening movements are on the right path is the positions they adopt on the issue of Palestine. Since sixty years ago up until today, the occupation of Palestine has been the biggest tragedy that has been imposed on the Islamic Ummah.

Since the first day up until today, the tragedy of Palestine has been a combination of killings, assassinations, destruction, usurpation and transgression against what is held sacred in Islam. The necessity of putting up a resistance against this warring and usurping enemy and fighting him has been agreed upon by all Islamic denominations and all honest and healthy national currents. Any current in Islamic countries which disregards this religious and national responsibility out of consideration for the domineering demands of America or under the pretext of unreasonable justifications should not expect to be viewed as loyal to Islam and sincere in its nationalistic claims.

This is a test. Anybody who does not accept the slogan of liberating Holy Quds and saving the Palestinian nation and Palestinian territories or anybody who sidelines this slogan and turns his back on the camp of resistance, will be condemned. The Islamic Ummah should keep this clear and fundamental standard in mind everywhere and at all times.

Dear guests, brothers and sisters, never lose sight of the enemy's plot. Our lack of

vigilance creates opportunities for our enemies.

The lesson that Ali (greetings be upon him) teaches us is that "whoever is careless about his cause, his enemy will not sleep over this advantage..." In this regard, our experience in the Islamic Republic is also a source of lessons. After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the arrogant Western governments and America - which had long established full control over Iranian Taghuts and used to determine the political, economic and cultural destiny of our country and which had underestimated the enormous power of Islamic faith in society and remained unaware of the power of Islam and the Holy Quran to deploy forces and to guide - suddenly realized that they had been unaware and their governmental organizations, intelligence services and control rooms resumed work in order to make up for the overwhelming defeat they had suffered.

We have witnessed various kinds of machinations from them over the past thirty-something years. In essence, there have been two factors that have foiled their plots: insistence on Islamic principles

and presence of the people on the scene. These two factors are the key to the problems everywhere. The first factor is guaranteed by sincere religious faith in divine promises and the second factor is guaranteed by sincere efforts and honest clarification. A nation that has faith in the honesty and sincerity of its leaders will bring in enthusiasm with their blessed presence, and wherever a nation stays on the scene with a solid determination, no power will have the capability to defeat it. This is a successful experience for all the nations that gave rise to Islamic Awakening through their presence.

I pray to Allah the Exalted to bestow His guidance, assistance and mercy on you and on all Muslim nations.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107165598>

- **Canada’s claim on Iran is ridiculous: Iranian lawmaker**

On April 22, Canada said that its police had arrested two ‘foreign nationals’ who were planning to derail a VIA passenger train traveling between Toronto and New

York, claiming that the suspects had links to ‘al-Qaeda elements inside Iran.’”

A senior Iranian lawmaker has censured the Canadian government for its recent unfounded claim that Iran was linked to a ‘terror plot’ in Canada, describing the allegation as “ridiculous.”

Chairman of Iran’s Majlis Committee for National Security and Foreign Policy Alaeddin Boroujerdi said on Tuesday that “the Canadian government might have mistaken Iran for Saudi Arabia,” stressing that Iran is no place for al-Qaeda.

The Iranian lawmaker also stated that Canada’s false claim was part of its Iranophobia policy.

On April 22, Canada said that its police had arrested two ‘foreign nationals’ who were planning to derail a VIA passenger train traveling between Toronto and New York, claiming that the suspects had links to “al-Qaeda elements inside Iran.”

On April 23, Iran’s Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast dismissed the unfounded allegation by the Canadian government as part of its

Iranophobia campaign, saying that “al-Qaeda’s mindset is by no means congruent with [the ideology of] the Islamic Republic of Iran.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran is the biggest victim of terrorism, but the extremist administration of Canada has put Iranophobia on its agenda over the recent years,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman stated.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/30/301025/canadas-claim-on-iran-ridiculous/>

- **Rafsanjani reluctant to announce intentions for election, son says**

Hopefuls can register from May 7 to 11 for the country’s 11th presidential election, which will be held on June 14.

The son of former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani says his father is reluctant about announcing his intentions to run for president in the upcoming election.

Yasser Hashemi Rafsanjani said in Mashhad on Monday that the former president might toss his hat in the ring if

his concerns are addressed, the Fars News Agency reported.

On Sunday, Rafsanjani, who is currently the chairman of the Expediency Council, stated that he would take measures to reform the Islamic Republic’s domestic and foreign policies if elected.

Rafsanjani served as Iran’s president from 1989 to 1997. In 2005, he ran for a third term in office, but he ultimately lost the race to his rival Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

A number of political figures have expressed interest in competing in the Islamic Republic’s upcoming presidential election.

Hopefuls can register from May 7 to 11 for the country’s 11th presidential election, which will be held on June 14.

The president of Iran is elected for a four-year term in a national election, and the Guardian Council vets the candidates based on their qualifications.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/30/300985/rafsanjani-coy-about-election-intentions/>

- **Iran ready to mediate in Nagorno-Karabakh dispute: Larijani**



Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani has stressed Tehran's readiness to mediate between Azerbaijan and Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

In a Monday meeting with Secretary of Azerbaijan's National Security Council Ramiz Mehdiyev, Larijani said that regional countries are capable of solving their problems through close cooperation.

"In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran stresses its readiness to contribute to the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis," he said.

Larijani pointed to numerous cultural, religious and geographical commonalities between Iran and Azerbaijan two countries and described their relations as brotherly and friendly.

He underlined the significance of using the potentials of the two countries to develop bilateral political, economic and cultural ties, adding that Majlis supports any approach aimed at boosting cooperation and relations based on mutual respect and common interests.

Mehdiyev, for his part, said that Iran is a friend of Azerbaijan and there are deeply historical bonds between the people of the two states.

He warned against efforts by certain foreign countries to disturb friendly relations between Tehran and Baku, urging the consolidation of relations.

He also welcomed Iran's efforts to help the settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Both Azerbaijan and Armenia claim the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, which is largely populated by Armenians but located in Azerbaijan.

Ethnic Armenian forces took control over the enclave which accounts for 16 percent of Azerbaijan in the early 1990s during a

six-year war with the country that took place from February 1988 to May 1994.

The conflict left an estimated 30,000 people dead and one million displaced before the two sides agreed to a cease-fire in 1994. However, a peace accord has never been signed and the dispute still remains unsettled.

Iran has on several occasions offered to intervene in the dispute.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/29/300943/iran-ready-to-mediate-in-karabakh-issue/>

- **Iran will remain an active IAEA member state, NPT signatory**

TEHRAN, Apr. 30 (MNA) – The Iranian ambassador to the UN nuclear agency has said that the Islamic Republic of Iran will remain an active member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

According to the Mehr News Agency, Ali Asghar Soltanieh made the remarks at the

second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which started on April 22 at the United Nations Office in Geneva and will close on May 3. This meeting is the second of three sessions that will be held prior to the 2015 Review Conference.

The Iranian ambassador also said that Iran was fully committed to the NPT and regarded the IAEA as the only authority that had jurisdiction to verify nuclear activities of member states.

In addition, he said, “Iran has disappointed the United States and a number of Western countries that made miscalculations in their predictions and hoped that Iran would withdraw from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty after the UN Security Council’s intervention and the imposition of sanctions.”

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1820946>

- **Turkey to Continue Oil Imports from Iran despite Sanctions**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Turkish Energy and Natural Resources Minister Taner Yıldız said Turkey will continue importing natural gas from Iran despite the US-led western sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Yıldız made the remarks at a press conference after a meeting with a delegation from the US House of Representatives and the Senate in Ankara on Monday.

"Turkey's oil-purchase contract with Iran expires in August. This contract will definitely be extended, because Iran covers about 45 to 40 percent of Turkey's oil needs," the Turkish energy minister said.

The Turkish energy minister noted that there is no alternative for the Iranian gas.

The United States in November expanded sanctions on global trade with Iran's energy and shipping sectors to ratchet up economic pressure on Tehran over its civilian nuclear program.

The package kept in place exemptions for countries including Turkey that made

significant cuts to their purchases of Iranian crude, but new sanctions are due to take effect this year.

Yıldız said Tupras, which is controlled by Turkey's biggest company Koc Holding, will continue to buy the same amount it has been under the exemption.

The United States and many of its allies accuse Iran of enriching uranium to levels used in nuclear weapons. Iran says its atomic program is for peaceful purposes.

Turkey imports more than 90 percent of its oil and gas.

Iran and Turkey are determined to boost their trade exchanges to \$35 billion in the near future.

Iran and Turkey have increased their cooperation in various fields of economy, security, trade, education, energy and culture in the recent years.

The two sides have exchanged several politico-economic delegations during the last few months.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107165886>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israel's 5th Dolphin submarine launched in north Germany**



Israel has launched its fifth Dolphin-class submarine, which was constructed to undertake long-range classified missions and carry missiles armed with nuclear warheads, at a shipyard in northern Germany.

The director general of Israel's Ministry of Military Affairs, Major General Udi Shani, the commander of the Israeli navy, Rear Admiral Ram Rothberg, and a number of other Israeli and German officials attended the inauguration of the submarine at the Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft (HDW) shipyard in Kiel Port on Monday.

The submarine, named the INS Rahav, will cost \$500 million and will arrive in Israel in one year upon the completion and installation of its relevant systems. It is considered one of the most advanced submarines in the world and will be Israel's most expensive piece of military equipment.

Israel's first three Dolphin-class submarines are believed to be some of the most sophisticated diesel-electric submarines in the world. The fourth submarine, the INS Tanin, the first of the new generation Dolphin II submarines, was delivered in May 2012.

Germany donated the first two submarines after the first Persian Gulf War and agreed to cover a third of the cost of the third one.

In March 2012, Israel signed a contract for a sixth Dolphin-class submarine, to be delivered in a few years.

Israeli officials consider the submarines to be a critical aspect of the Israeli nuclear deterrent. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the submarines "a

strong and strategic tool” for the Israeli navy.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/30/300987/israel-launches-5th-dolphin-class-sub/>

- **Following an IAF strike on Gaza terrorist, Netanyahu promises to continue protecting Israelis, respond to attacks.**

Israel will continue to protect citizens of Israel, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday after the IAF announced that it carried out a targeted assassination on terrorist Hitham Mashal.

"I said that we will not let this pass quietly in continuation with our policy," Netanyahu said, "we will not accept a drizzle of rockets from Gaza or Sinai, we will act to defend the citizens of Israel and that is what we are doing."

Mashal, a northern Gaza resident, was a weapons expert connected to the Aknaf Bet Al-Maqdes group, and was believed by security officials to be involved with the rocket attacks on Eilat earlier this month.

The prime minister made his comments before entering a meeting with Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic.

The IAF strike followed the murder of Yitzhar resident Evyatar Borovsky in a terrorist attack at the Tapuah junction.

Netanyahu expressed his condolences to the family of Borovsky saying, "I express my condolences, and those of the entire country, to the family of Evyatar Borovsky."

"The terrorist was caught and we will continue to take action on this front as well to defend our citizens," he added.

The funeral for Borovsky will take place Tuesday evening in Kfar Hassidim

<http://www.jpost.com/National-News/PM-Israel-will-continue-to-defend-our-citizens-311555>

- **Arab states modify initiative on peace with Israel**

In a turnaround, the Qatari prime minister says that the Arab League will support territorial exchanges.

The Arab League yesterday upgraded its peace initiative with Israel, declaring that it now supports "minor" territorial exchanges between Israel and a future Palestine as one of the conditions for normalizing relations between Israel and Arab states. In the original initiative from 2002, the Arab League demanded that Israel should withdraw from all of the Golan Heights, West Bank, east Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

The new version of the initiative was announced by Qatari Prime Minister Sheik Hamad Bin Jassem Al Thani, who is heading an Arab League delegation in talks in Washington, after separate meetings with US Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State John Kerry. At a press conference following the meeting with Kerry, Al Thani said, "The Arab League reiterates and confirms that an agreement (between Israel and the Palestinians) should be based on the solution of two states on the basis of the border of June 4, 1967, with the possibility of mutually agreed, minor comparable land exchanges."

Al Thani added, "The Arab League delegation recognizes that peace between

Israel and the Palestinians is the strategic choice of the Arab people."

The delegation included representatives from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Bahrain, the Palestinian Authority, and Lebanon.

Yesterday, analysts said that the moderation in the Arab League's position bring it close to US President Barack Obama's policy announcement of May 2011, under which the solution to the conflict is two states for two nations along the 1967 border, with the option of mutually agreed land swaps. Obama's position was adopted as a way to implement the letter of his predecessor, George W. Bush, of May 2004 to then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. The letter states that the future border between Israel and Palestine will be determined on the basis of the reality on the ground, including the existence of Israeli population centers in the West Bank.

Al Thani's statement yesterday did not mention other important aspects of the Arab League's peace initiative, which have remained unchanged, including "finding a just solution" to the problem of

Palestinian refugees on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 194; in other words, the "right of return".

The analysts believe that the relative moderation in the Arab League's position was achieved at Kerry's urging, and indicate Obama's determination to move forward on an Israeli-Palestinian peace during his second term. They believe that the US administration plans to convene a summit in Washington with the participation of Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen), and Jordan's King Abdullah II. The summit could be the start of renewed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

<http://www.globes.co.il/serveen/globes/docview.asp?did=1000840160>

- **On Labor Day, Unemployment in Palestine Stands at 23%**

RAMALLAH, April 30, 2013 (WAFA) – Marking Labor Day, which coincides on May 1, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) said Tuesday that

unemployment rate in Palestine in 2012 was 23%, or 256,000 people were unemployed.

It said 21% of the unemployed were males and 33% females.

In addition, unemployment rate in the West Bank was 19% (about 141,000) compared to 31% in Gaza Strip (115,000).

The report said participation of men in the labor force was four times higher than the participation of women at a rate of 69% males to 17% females.

On West Bank level, the participation rate was 46% divided into 71% for males compared to 19% females, and in Gaza Strip about 40% of persons participated in the labor force; 65% for males and 15% for females.

The number of waged employees in Palestine amounted to 574,000, of whom 307,000 employed in the West Bank, 190,000 employed in Gaza Strip; 63,000 employed in Israel and 14,000 employed in Israeli settlements.

About 53% of wage employees in Palestine worked in the private sector compared with 34% employed by the public sector; while the percentage of workers in Israel and Israeli settlements reached 13%.

Regarding wage employees in the West Bank, more than half of them at about 55% worked in the private sector compared with 25% in the public sector and 20% in Israel and Israeli settlements. The public sector was the largest employer in Gaza Strip with 52% compared with 48% in the private sector.

About 22% of wage employees are poor in Palestine in 2011; 16% in the West Bank and 35% in Gaza Strip.

About 25% of wage employees work as professionals or technicians in Palestine; 17% for males and 66% for females. Moreover, 18% of wage employees in Palestine work in craft occupations; 21% for males and 4% for females.

The average daily real wage in Palestine was around \$15 for both males and females with the West Bank workers, not including workers in Israel and the

settlements, getting a little bit more than Gaza workers.

The services sector in the private sector recorded the highest average daily wage at \$28 in the West Bank and a little less in Gaza Strip, followed by transport and communication sector where West Bank employees received around average wage but Gaza employees got half of what their West Bank counterparts received. The agriculture sector recorded the lowest average daily wage.

The average weekly work week in hours in Palestine was 41 hours; distributed as 39 hours for employed persons in the public sector to 42 hours in the private sector.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=22257>

- **Settlement Expansion Focus of Dailies**

RAMALLAH, April 30, 2013 (Wafa) – Expansion of illegal Israeli settlements mushrooming in the occupied Palestinian Territory was the focus of the Tuesday issue of the three Palestinian Arabic dailies.

The papers focused on the planned expansion of Givat Zeev, north of Jerusalem, Modain, west of Ramallah, and other settlements near Tulkarm. In addition, the papers said settlers took over some 400 dunums of land in the village of Azmout, near Nablus, and began working on the land as if they own it.

The demolition of homes in East Jerusalem was also highlighted on the front page of the dailies, which printed pictures of people standing near the concrete rubble of their homes after the demolition, in addition to a picture of an elderly Palestinian at hospital after being attacked by settlers in the West Bank.

Moving the former striking prisoner Samer Issawi from Kaplan hospital near Tel Aviv to Ramla prison clinic was also highlighted on the front page of the dailies, which said that Issawi was able to walk on his own feet for the first time after ending his hunger strike last week following a deal to release him in eight months.

Al-Quds said in a story on reconciliation that Fatah and Hamas are planning to hold decisive talks in Cairo. It said Fatah's main

reconciliation negotiator Azzam al-Ahmad is going to Cairo to meet his Hamas counterpart, Mousa Abu Marzouq, to discuss the decision by President Mahmoud Abbas to start consultations on forming the new government of independent technocrats.

The three papers printed a story by the French news agency, AFP, about Palestinians and Syrian who fled war-torn Syria to the Gaza Strip. The story said more than 200 families who fled Syria arrived in the Gaza Strip, some through the smuggling tunnels, and others through Rafah crossing after showing a temporary Palestinian passport.

Al-Quds had a story quoting Jordanian councilman Taher Masri saying the coming days will witness major developments on the borders with Syria.

Al-Ayyam and al-Hayat al-Jadida said Palestinian Christians sent a letter to Pope Francis asking his intervention to stop an Israeli plan to build a section of the segregation wall on land belonging to the Salisan convent in Beit Jala.

The papers also said Muslim leader Yousef Qaradawi plans to visit the Gaza Strip on May 8.

A story in al-Quds said dozens of people in the south of the Gaza Strip were diagnosed with the mumps disease.

A story in al-Hayat al-Jadida said a 12-year-old sixth grade student said to be a genius has joined the university in Hebron. The student, who was identified as Yehya Abu Jweied, from al-Majd village, southwest of Hebron, has joined the math class at University of Hebron due to his outstanding performance in this field.

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=22254>

- **Israel hails Arab League's stance on land swaps**

Israel's lead peace negotiator Tzipi Livni Tuesday praised as "important" a concession by the Arab League that Israel and the Palestinians could trade land in a bid to move the peace process forward.

"This is very good news," she told army radio. "It's definitely an important step -- I welcome it."

"Let's talk about it -- we are ready for changes, something which will allow the Palestinians, I hope, to enter the [negotiating] room and make the necessary compromises," she said after Arab League representatives said for the first time they would accept the concept of land swaps in the context of an Israeli withdrawal to the pre-1967 lines.

"It also gives a message to Israeli citizens: it is no longer just us ... talking with the Palestinians, there is a group of Arab states who are saying: you reach an agreement with the Palestinians and we will make peace with you, we will have normalization with you."

At a meeting in Washington on Monday, US Secretary of State John Kerry met with top Arab League officials to discuss the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, a Saudi proposal which would see 22 Arab countries normalizing ties with Israel in return for a withdrawal from lands it occupied during the 1967 Six Day War.

Speaking after the talks, Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim, who led the delegation, agreed that any deal should be based on a two-state solution with the borders defined by the lines which existed before June 4, 1967.

But he also expressed support for a proposal by US President Barack Obama for a "comparable and mutual agreed minor swap of the land" between Israelis and Palestinians to reflect the realities of the burgeoning communities on the ground.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/mena/israel-hails-arab-leagues-stance-on-land-swaps>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Al-Qaeda assails government to lure disgruntled Algerians**

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) issued two long, rambling statements on Twitter last week, attempting to exploit corruption cases in Algeria.

In the first statement, published April 21st, AQIM slammed Algeria for failed

progress and linked the on-going debate about corruption cases to the 2014 presidential election. The second statement, issued on Friday (April 26th), took the same tact, directly criticising Oil Minister Chakib Khelil. The same declaration also questioned the suicide of a Sonatrach official.

Both statements carried the signature of Sheikh Ahmed Abu Abdul-Elah Al-Jigli Al-Jazaeri, a media official with the terror network.

Al-Qaeda's use of Twitter to talk about corruption and question Algerian authorities' efforts to bring to justice all those involved sparked angry reactions among security experts and citizens.

Saida Benhabyles, an activist and former minister, said that AQIM was "using the same method as opportunists and trying to exploit all circumstances and developments to achieve its goals and hit Algeria".

"AQIM has used religion, manipulated regionalism and language and is now using corruption because it's the topic of the hour," she said.

"In fact, AQIM wants to exploit corruption to win people's confidence which it lost because of its crimes against Algerians and foreigners," she added. "The group is raising a sensitive issue for Algerians, i.e. stealing public money, and is thus targeting the authorities' efforts to combat this phenomenon."

To the former minister, AQIM's use of corruption at this particular time was not a surprise. "Each time, the group tries to look for a means or a justification to try to attract Algerians' attention," she noted.

"In the past, it used religion and fatwas that authorise killing, and is now using corruption to justify killing and bombing under the pretext of fighting corruption and corrupters," Benhabyles continued.

"AQIM is claiming to be fighting corruption, but it has actually committed the biggest kinds of corruption by kidnapping innocent people, killing them and demanding ransom for their release," she added. "It has also targeted the houses of innocent people and unarmed citizens to steal their money and forced traders and farmers to pay money. In this

way, they are the first symbols of corruption and biggest corrupters on land because sedition and killing are corruption."

In his turn, Kamal Hadeif, a researcher in terrorism, said that AQIM's statement was "nothing but a media manoeuvre".

"The statement is purely a show and an attempt to be part of the trend and take advantage of popular anger among Algerians," he added. "AQIM realises this quite well and is trying to appear as if it is living with the people and is thus trying to make it up for its military failure with unreal media successes."

Former military officer Taher Ben Thamer also suggested al-Qaeda was turning to social media because of a failure on the battlefield.

"The group's military inability has made it opt for a media and electronic confrontation through a number of statements on websites and tweets on Twitter to win new supporters," Ben Thamer said.

"The group always looks for words to make its speech acceptable to Algerians," the military expert added. "It is no longer using religious speech, at least in speeches addressed to the Algerian public. Rather, it is focusing on specific topics and simple words in which they criticise the authorities and try to exploit people's anger."

Mohamed Hamu, a 51-year-old university professor, said, "There is no Algerian who would accept the theft and pillage of this country's wealth, but this is no justification for the machine of killing, destruction and logic of takfir that AQIM is trying to impose on Algerians."

"The group is trying to exploit young people's anger over what is happening in Algeria to realise its goals which it has failed to realise over two decades," the professor added.

Other Algerians had similar views on the al-Qaeda propaganda.

"How can those people talk about corruption when they were the ones who resorted to killing and intimidation and pointed their guns and bombs at innocent

people?" asked Saleh Othmani, a 40-year-old employee.

He added, "Corruption is not just stealing money; killing people is corruption, looting is corruption and intimidating citizens is corruption."

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a-wi/features/2013/04/29/feature-01

- **Tunisia arrests hundreds in Syria recruit probe**

Hundreds of Tunisian salafists were arrested last week as part of a probe into jihadist recruitment centres that trained and sent young fighters to Syria, the interior minister said.

"Several networks to recruit young Tunisians for jihad in Syria have indeed been dismantled," Shems FM quoted Lotfi Ben Jeddou as saying on Thursday (April 25th). "They belong to the hardline salafists groups or criminal groups."

The centres were concealed as officially recognised salafist charities, the minister

said. They reportedly received money for each combatant sent to Syria via Turkey.

The investigation began after families of the recruits claimed the young men had been indoctrinated at salafist-dominated mosques, Ansa reported.

The question of Tunisian jihadists in Syria has turned into a national issue, some observers say. Last Friday, Assabah reported that the youngest Tunisian to fall on the battlefield did not exceed the age of ten.

Tunisians who departed to fight in Syria may turn into a ticking time bomb after returning from the battlefield, according to journalist Zouhair Latif, who spent 17 days in Syria where he met a number of Tunisian fighters and detainees.

"Whatever the outcome of the conflict in Syria, we will find ourselves one day facing a worrisome question in Tunisia: who will absorb these returnees? And mind you we are not talking about dozens, but hundreds," Latif told Magharebia.

He noted that Tunisians "We don't, as far as I can tell, have any specialized

institution for rehabilitation and assimilation".

According to political scientist Slaheddine Jouchi, the issue "must be addressed seriously because these fighters will return to Tunisia and will find a number of problems in adapting to the state of the country as well as in reintegrating into their careers and families after having lived under conditions of armed conflict".

But the main question, according to the analyst, is whether they "will be able to distance themselves from international armed organisations, which will continue to consider them under their command".

Jouchi, who was a member of the executive bureau of the Tunisian Human Rights League, argued that travel abroad can be restricted "within the boundaries of respect for human rights" for the sake of national security.

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a-wi/features/2013/04/29/feature-02

- **Fingers pointed after second mass food poisoning at Al-Azhar**

Another mass food poisoning at Al-Azhar University re-opens debate over relationship between Grand Imam Ahmed El-Tayeb and Muslim Brotherhood



President Mohamed Morsi has sent presidential assistant Ayman Ali and Health Minister Mohamed Mustafa Hamed to visit Al-Azhar University students who were hospitalised late Monday suffering from food poisoning.

According to the health ministry, 131 people were admitted to hospital after eating at the university dormitory.

The general prosecution has opened an investigation into the incident.

The mass food poisoning is the second of its kind at Al-Azhar University this month. It has triggered reactions from officials, student union members and others.

According to a statement released by the Muslim Brotherhood, President Morsi has contacted Egyptian Student Union deputy leader Ahmed Abdel-Rahman El-Bakry, who is also head of Al-Azhar Student Union, to check on the students' health.

El-Bakry, a Brotherhood member, said in a statement that he had informed the president of the students' demands which include the dismissal of the head of Al-Azhar University and his replacement with an elected leader rather than one appointed by the president.

Hundreds of students blocked Nasr Road late Monday in protest at the incident. Some chanted against Al-Azhar Grand Imam Ahmed El-Tayeb, just as they had done after the previous mass food poisoning on 1 April. Police used teargas to disperse the students.

After the first food poisoning incident, thousands took to the streets in support of El-Tayeb and against what they believed was a Brotherhood ploy to use the incident to force his sacking and further "Brotherhoodise" Al-Azhar.

“The repeated poisoning of Al-Azhar students, the blocking of roads and chants against the Al-Azhar [grand imam] is like a bad movie and whoever is responsible for it should be held accountable for political stupidity,” Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights leader Hafez Abu-Seada stated via Facebook.

Abu-Seada hinted that the Brotherhood would use the incident to get rid of El-Tayeb, especially after his popularity was boosted by a successful visit to the UAE to secure the release of more than 100 Egyptian prisoners.

The chants against El-Tayeb at the protest on Monday night were “completely spontaneous,” Sohaib Abdel-Maqsoud, spokesperson for the Brotherhood students, told Al-Ahram Arabic website.

The Brotherhood will not be quick to point blame while investigations into the incident are ongoing, group spokesperson Ahmed Aref told Al-Ahram Arabic website.

Egyptian Student Union leader Mohamed Badran, an independent, said he would be attending a meeting with the prime

minister to discuss deteriorating conditions at the country's universities.

Nationwide student demonstrations have been taking place over the past week to demand better services, condemn deteriorating conditions, and to demand the sacking of the higher education minister.

Al-Azhar students fell sick on Monday after eating meals served at the university's dormitory in Cairo's Nasr City. Hundreds of angry students blocked Nasr Road near the dormitory and clashed with police who fired teargas in an attempt to open the road to traffic.

This marks the second large-scale food poisoning case to take place at Al-Azhar in April.

Around 500 students were hospitalised on 1 April after suffering food poisoning at the same cafeteria.

The incident led to mass demonstrations by students, some of whom called for the sacking of Grand Imam Ahmed Tayeb, who oversees the Al-Azhar religious-educational system in Egypt.

The grand imam sacked the president of Al-Azhar University and an investigation into the case is still pending.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/P/1/70414/Egypt/Fingers-pointed-after-second-mass-food-poisoning-a.aspx>

- **Tahrir Imam is free to lead prayers again after court order**

An Egyptian court reverses order to stop the popular 'Tahrir Imam,' Mazhar Shahin from leading prayers deemed anti-Brotherhood

Egypt's administrative Disciplinary Court halts an order to suspend Sheikh Mazhar Shahin, who is well-known for leading prayers in Cairo's Tahrir Square during and after Egypt's 18-day uprising in 2011.



Earlier in April, Shahin was suspended as imam (Islamic leader) of Omar Makram Mosque in Tahrir by Egypt's ministry of endowments (also known as awqaf, a body responsible for overseeing imams).

The charges against him included criticising President Mohamed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The 34-year-old imam revealed that the complaint against him reads that he acted like "a TV station or opposition paper" during his Friday sermons.

Shahin had been warning of the Brotherhood's monopoly of state institutions before the order to suspend him.

Despite the order, Shahin defiantly led the Friday prayers in his mosque on 12 April declaring that he "will continue to speak the truth and will not become a hypocrite in order to satisfy a minister, ruler or group."

The Disciplinary Court's cancellation of the endowment ministry's order, however, annuls any consequences of the

suspension, even including any salary withheld.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/70359/Egypt/Politics-/Tahrir-Imam-is-free-to-lead-prayers-again-after-co.aspx>

- **Sunni Associations Counter Visit of Wahhabi Preacher**

The upcoming visit of Egyptian Wahhabi preacher Mohamed Hassan to Tunisia has triggered debate and met with opposition from Sunni religious associations who aim to prevent the growing influence of Wahhabism in the country.

Hassan is expected to arrive tomorrow and was invited to the country by other religious associations, including the Reform and Preaching group, headed by Habib Ellouz, a member of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) affiliated with the Ennahdha ruling party.

The visit prompted 30 Sunni associations to form a front and launch a national campaign to protect Tunisia from Wahhabism.

“Tunisia is a country that is open to all beliefs,” Ellouz told radio Shems FM. “To invite thinkers and religious figures from Egypt is an honor to Tunisia. In addition, Mohamed Hassan does not have fatwas that contradict the Tunisian culture. He is a thinker who is open minded and he also calls for tolerance.”

He added that “this training session will not promote Wahhabi thought. It is the media that is promoting such ideas.”

Hassan will deliver speeches in different parts of Tunisia and will also give Friday sermons in Tunisian mosques. He is considered a controversial figure and is known for opposing the Egyptian revolution and for advocating female circumcision.

Farid Elbeji, president of the association Dar Al-Hadith Al-Zaytuna, expressed his disapproval of such visits in an interview with Shems FM and said they will promote Wahhabi thought in a country with a long Sunni tradition.

“We are not against the person but we are against Wahhabism,” he explained.

“Wahhabism is known for being extremist, exclusionary and violent.”

A week ago, the Open Islamic Academy, known for being a Wahhabi organization sponsored by Saudi Arabia, announced it will hold a training session at Al-Zaytuna, which is known for being a Sunni institution, Elbeji said. Preachers at Al-Zaytuna and several Sunni organizations expressed their disapproval of the event.

“We launched a national campaign against Wahhabism and we will only opt for peaceful methods since we believe in the importance of peace and unity to this country during this period,” he added. “Yet we will keep a watchful eye over what they are presenting during this training.”

Mohamed Khilil, head of the Union of Sufi Orders, one of the associations aiming to protect Tunisia from Wahhabism, told Shems FM that the country is open to different opinions, but there are limits that must be respected.

“We cannot possibly accept any threats to our beliefs,” he said. “This preacher has a creed that rejects any different opinions.

The Wahhabi thought rejects those who hold a different faith and we also have the right to reject those who are against our moderate Sunni beliefs.”

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/04/29/sunni-associations-counter-visit-of-wahhabi-preacher/>

- **Egypt creates a flutter at Geneva nuclear talks**

Country’s delegation stages walkout seeking firm steps on regional non-proliferation

Geneva: Egypt walked out of a round of global nuclear talks in protest on Monday, saying other nations are not acting quickly enough to establish the Middle East as a zone free of nuclear weapons.

A statement from Egypt’s Foreign Ministry said the nation ended its participation in two weeks of Geneva talks out of frustration that the zone has yet to be created. The talks run through this week.

“We can’t wait forever for the implementation of this decision,” said the

ministry's statement on Monday night, explaining that Egypt's walkout was meant to send a message to the world that it can no longer accept what it considers to be a lack of seriousness on the issue.

But establishing the Middle East as a zone free of nuclear weapons has long been an elusive goal.

The Geneva talks, which have included no negotiations on such a zone, are meant to prepare for the next major review of the 1970 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 2015. Such reviews are held once every five years.

The NPT, which has been signed by 190 nations, is the world's single most important pact on nuclear arms, credited with preventing their spread to dozens of nations since it was adopted. Iran is a member, but four nations that are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons — Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea — are not. Of the non-members, Israel, India and Pakistan never signed the treaty, but North Korea ratified it in 1985 only to withdraw in 2003 after US allegations that it had started illegally enriching uranium.

A series of UN Security Council resolutions has demanded that Iran curb its uranium enrichment. The West fears Iran may be aiming to develop nuclear weapons, but Tehran has denied the charges, saying its programme is geared toward generating and producing radioisotopes to treat cancer patients.

At the 1995 review, nations adopted the goal of a nuclear-free Middle East, in a concession by the US and others to the Arab states, who wanted the Israelis to join the treaty and to give up its unacknowledged arsenal of nuclear weapons. In exchange, Arab states backed the treaty's permanent extension.

But after 15 years of inaction on a nuclear-free zone, Egypt proposed that the 2010 conference endorse the launch of negotiations to establish one. With no talks started, Egypt said on Monday that some other members of the treaty — and non-members — are "obstructing" the goal.

Ahead of the Geneva talks to prevent the spread of nuclear arms, the UN Security Council's five major powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United

States — had again called for progress in establishing a nuclear-free Middle East.

Egypt’s assistant foreign minister Hesham Badr told the Geneva conference this month that “the history of this issue ... has been of one unfulfilled commitment after the other. Egypt and many Arab countries have joined the NPT with the understanding that this would lead to a Middle East completely free of nuclear weapons. However, more than 30 years later, one country in the Middle East — namely Israel — remains outside the NPT.”

<http://gulfnews.com/news/region/egypt/egypt-creates-a-flutter-at-geneva-nuclear-talks-1.1177149>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Minister: Hezbollah fanning strife in Bahrain**

Bahrain’s Minister of State for Information Affairs Samira Rajab accused the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah of encouraging terrorism and inciting strife in her country.

“Hezbollah is fanning the flame of conflict [in Bahrain] and training terrorists,” Rajab

was quoted as saying by Kuwaiti daily Al-Rai on Tuesday during a press conference at an Arab media forum in Bahrain.

The minister also said that her country was “coordinating with Gulf states and other world countries” to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

The Shiite Muslim-majority kingdom, ruled by a Sunni dynasty, was rocked by a month-long uprising in 2011 which was crushed with the help of Gulf troops led by neighboring Saudi Arabia.

Shiite youths frequently clash with police in villages surrounding Manama. In some cases they hurl petrol bombs an

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/gulfnews/minister-hezbollah-fanning-strife-in-bahrain>

- **MPs call for postponing decision to reimpose 16 per cent accommodation tax**



AMMAN — Thirteen deputies on Monday called for postponing a government decision to reimpose a 16 per cent accommodation tax on the Kingdom's hotels until the beginning of 2014.

The decision is scheduled to go into effect on Wednesday, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

In a memo, the deputies requested that Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srour forward this recommendation to Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, warning that the tax will harm the tourism sector, Petra reported.

In March, the minister of finance recommended that the Cabinet reimpose the 16 per cent tax on room accommodations, after three years of reducing this tax to 8 per cent.

The tax reduction over the past three years was aimed at supporting the tourism industry after it was hit as a result of regional turmoil and the global financial crisis.

In previous remarks to The Jordan Times, Jordan Hotels Association Executive Director Yasar Majali said the decision will prompt hotels to raise their room rates.

In addition to the accommodation tax, he said, hotels pay 11 per cent of their profits in income tax to the government.

According to the Jordan Tourism Board, there are 23,882 hotel rooms in Jordan, of which 6,697 rooms are in five-star hotels, 3,285 in four-star hotels, while 3,231 belong to three-star hotels.

According to the latest figures, the tourism industry's revenues brought in JD2.456 billion in 2012, a 15.3 per cent increase from JD2.130 billion in 2011.

Despite this increase in revenues, the total number of visitors to the country fell by 7.3 per cent in 2012, to 6,314,250, compared with 6,812,426 in 2011.

<http://jordantimes.com/mps-call-for-postponing-decision-to-reimpose-16-percent-accommodation-tax>

- **Berri and Jumblatt to continue election talks**

BEIRUT: Speaker Nabih Berri and Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt will continue to hold talks over the electoral law, sources close to the speaker said Monday, hours after the PSP rejected Berri's hybrid proposal.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the sources said that Berri and Jumblatt agreed to hold more discussions to tackle the number of districts and MPs to be elected under proportional representation and under a winner-takes-all system, respectively.

"The speaker will continue his meetings with various parties. He will meet tomorrow [Tuesday] with Future Movement MP Ahmad Fatfat and Kataeb MP Sami Gemayel," one source said.

"He will continue his discussions until May 15, when he will hold consecutive sessions and work day and night to achieve

consensus on a new electoral law," he said.

The source explained that if no consensus was reached on a voting system, the speaker would resort to putting the existing draft laws to a vote.

"The speaker will not consider extending the Parliament's term before exhausting all potential avenues for agreement," the source said.

A PSP delegation visited Berri earlier in the day and informed him of Jumblatt's rejection of the proposal he had submitted a week earlier.

Under Berri's proposal, 55 to 60 percent of MPs would be elected under a winner-takes-all system and a one-man-one-vote system.

The rest would be elected under proportional representation.

The qada would be the electoral district under the winner-takes-all system and the governorate under proportional representation.

“We discussed the proposal with Berri. He had his views and we had ours and we reached a conclusion that his proposal is not the ideal one,” caretaker Social Affairs Minister Wael Abu Faour, from the PSP, told reporters after the meeting. Despite the stepped-up efforts to agree on an electoral law, a postponement of the June elections appears increasingly likely.

Earlier this month, Parliament passed a law suspending electoral deadlines under the 1960 law until May 19 to give parties time to reach consensus over an alternative law.

Last week, a group of PSP MPs, along with independent Christian and other lawmakers who oppose the suspension, challenged it before the Constitutional Council.

The MPs also called for delaying the suspension of poll deadlines until the council issues its final ruling on their challenge.

But the council said after a meeting Monday that there was no justification for deferring the law, because upholding the

initial challenge to revoke it would have the same effect.

“We ruled unanimously that there is no justification for deferring the law, because if the council annuls the law, it will be abolishing its effects that were published in the Official Gazette on April 12,” Issam Suleiman, the council’s head, told The Daily Star.

Suleiman said he appointed a rapporteur whose name was undisclosed to prepare a report on the PSP challenge to the law. The report will be prepared within 10 days, at which point Suleiman will convene the council.

Suleiman said the body would issue its ruling by May 26.

“[If the challenge is accepted] the council will either decide to accept it in its entirety or specific elements that that violate the Constitution,” Suleiman said.

If the challenge is upheld then the law would be considered nonexistent, Suleiman said.

As efforts to pave the way for parliamentary elections intensified, Al-Manar said Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hasan Nasrallah would speak on the TV station Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. to tackle political developments.

Russia's ambassador to Lebanon denied Monday that Moscow had, through its deputy foreign minister, asked Hezbollah to withdraw its fighters from Syria.

"[Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail] Bogdanov did not ask Hezbollah to do that, but listened to party official's stances on this issue," Russian Ambassador Alexander Zasytkin told a local media outlet.

President Michel Sleiman discussed efforts to reach agreement on an electoral law and form a new government with MP Mohammad Raad, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc.

Separately, no new developments emerged in efforts to form the new Cabinet.

"There is nothing new. The prime minister-designate is still waiting for the

response of the March 8 coalition on the principles he outlined in previous meetings, based on which he plans to form the government," a source close to Salam said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Apr-30/215543-berri-and-jumblatt-to-continue-election-talks.ashx#axzz2RwQUgDWZ>

• **Deadly blast rocks central Damascus**

A blast in the central Damascus district of Marjeh on Tuesday killed at least 13 people, Syrian state television reported, a day after a Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi survived a bomb attack elsewhere in the capital.

"The number of casualties in the cowardly terrorist blast targeting the commercial and historic center of Damascus in the Marjeh district rose to 13 martyrs and more than 70 injured," state television reported, citing the Interior Ministry.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported "14 dead, including nine civilians and five members of the security forces, in

a car bomb attack near the old interior ministry headquarters."

The toll could rise further because a number of the wounded were in critical condition, the monitoring group said.

"Internationally-financed and -supported terrorism committed a terrible massacre against civilians in the commercial and historic center of Damascus," state television reported, citing an official source.

Official channels broadcast footage showing smoke billowing over the site of the explosion, which blew out the windows of nearby cars, knocking off the bumpers some and starting fires.

Uniformed and armed plainclothes security forces could be seen running near the scene, as residents fled.

Several mutilated bodies could be seen lying in the street, and at least one body wrapped in a white sheet was laid out alongside an ambulance.

Fire engines were at the scene with firefighters battling several blazes.

"What mistake have we committed? I was going to work. Look at the bodies. Is this the freedom they want?" a bystander said to state media.

The attack came a day after a blast in the Mazzeh neighborhood of the capital targeting Halqi.

The car bomb, which exploded as his convoy passed through the upscale neighborhood, killed one of his bodyguards and five other people, according to the Observatory.

The blast, apparently detonated by remote control, took place in the well-secured Mazzeh district, which is home to politicians, embassies, government offices and intelligence facilities.

Halqi, who was appointed prime minister in August 2012 after his predecessor Riad Hijab defected to the opposition, is the latest in a growing list of regime officials to be targeted for assassination.

In July 2012, a suicide bomb attack killed Syria's defense minister and deputy

defense minister and seriously wounded the interior minister.

Damascus has seen a wave of major bombings in recent weeks, including on April 9, when a massive blast in the center of the city killed at least 15 people.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/newsyriala-testnews/blast-rocks-central-damascus-casualties-reported>

6. SYRIA

• Syria troops battle militants in Homs

The Syrian troops have carried out a series of mop-up operations in the western city of Homs, forcing foreign-backed militants out of the city's flashpoint areas.

The Syrian armed forces destroyed a terrorist hideout and a workshop for manufacturing explosives in Jouret al-Shiyah neighborhood on Monday, Syria's official SANA news agency reported.

The Syrian forces also inflicted heavy losses on foreign-backed armed groups in al-Qusour, al-Khalidiye, al-Dar al-Kabireh,

Tal Dahab, Teldo and Kafr Laha in Homs countryside.

On Sunday, clashes erupted between the Syrian troops and militants in the district of Qudssaya, near the Syrian capital, Damascus. The Syrian army killed a number of militants many of whom were foreign nationals, SANA stated.

Terrorist hideouts were also raided by Syrian forces in the towns of Jobar, al-Shifoniyeh, al-Rihan, Harmala, Harasta and Barzeh al-Balad.

In addition, Syrian troops stormed a terrorist hideout in the town of Zamalka, about four kilometers (2.5 miles) east of Damascus. A large amount of weapons and munitions was destroyed after the fierce gun battle.

Similar operations were carried out by the Syrian army in the towns of Daraya, al-Hejjeira and al-Dhiyabiyeh.

The Syrian army has fully purged the town of Kimam in the strategic region of al-Qusayr near the border with Lebanon.

Syria has been gripped by a deadly unrest since March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of government security forces and army personnel, have been killed in the violence.

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

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/30/300991/syria-troops-battle-militants-in-homs/>

- **There's no legal basis for striking Syria**

Neither U.S. nor international law authorizes a U.S. attack on the Assad regime

How many innocent Syrian civilians would be killed should the United States launch air strikes against Syrian government radars, anti-aircraft sites and air bases -- obvious targets if the White House approved setting up the no-fly zone some members of Congress want? What would be the legal basis for such action?

These questions emerged Tuesday as I listened to a Senate Judiciary subcommittee hearing devoted to the constitutional and counterterrorism implications of targeted killings by drones -- unmanned aircraft. The countries mentioned were Yemen, Pakistan and to some degree Afghanistan.

Syria never became a focus because President Bashar Assad's military has advanced Russian fighter planes and air defense weapons. They make it impossible to use slow-flying drones, which can easily be shot down by relatively low-tech anti-aircraft weapons.

The hearing did focus on civilians killed by remotely piloted aircraft and the resultant fear and anger. But the testimony drew distinctions between the use of manned aircraft, which would have to be the case in Syria, and the drones that have drawn so much criticism as used elsewhere.

Martha McSally, a retired Air Force colonel, served in Afghanistan as commander of an A-10 fighter-bomber squadron providing close air support to troops on the ground and she later

directed plans and targeting oversight for remotely piloted aircraft in Africa. Col. McSally said the remotely piloted aircraft "has the advantage that it is an ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) and strike platform and can loiter overhead around the clock to ensure all strike criteria are met." Collateral damage is minimized because normal miss distances are "less than 10 feet."

Once the drone is chosen for a legal strike, Col. McSally said, unlike manned aircraft, commanders, intelligence analysts and legal experts monitor the operation and provide the "ability to abort the strike if the target moves or civilians enter the area." Another benefit she cited: immediate post-strike assessments.

Without mentioning Syria, Col. McSally drew comparisons between the use of drones and fighter-bombers. Manned fighter-bomber strikes need actionable intelligence and "the lead time required to plan, brief and travel to and from the target area." In the case of Syria, there would be a potential requirement for diplomatic overflight clearances, air re-fueling support and airborne command

and control, which she said are necessary "to provide real-time updates, clearance to strike and abort decisions." If there is no real-time intelligence, Col. McSally said, the final strike decision for fighter-bombers "is made by the pilot in command."

Legal authority for the use of drones in Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere -- but not in Syria -- was another focus of the hearing.

The Authorization for Use of Military Force, a joint resolution passed by Congress on Sept. 14, 2001, was first used by the George W. Bush administration and now by President Barack Obama to authorize the use of drones in counterterrorism operations. It gives the president authority to "use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed or aided the attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons, in order to prevent any future acts of international terrorism against the United States by such nations, organizations or persons."

According to a subcommittee witness, Georgetown University Law Center professor Rosa Brooks, the authorization's "language appears to restrict the use of force both with regard to who can be targeted -- those with some culpability for the 9/11 attacks -- and with regard to the purpose for which force is used -- to prevent future attacks against the U.S."

A former counselor in the Obama administration to the undersecretary of defense for policy, Ms. Brooks said drone strikes have evolved "from a tool used in extremely limited circumstances to go after specifically identified high-ranking al-Qaida officials to a tool relied on in an increasing number of countries to go after an eternally lengthening list of putative bad actors, with increasingly tenuous links to grave or imminent threats to the United States."

So what legal basis would be used for a military strike in Syria? The drone strikes in Yemen are openly authorized by that country's government. In Pakistan there is a less public wink-and-nod approach, though the military authorization clearly applies to al-Qaida and Taliban targets.

What imminent threat to the United States does the Assad regime in Syria pose? You could try to argue that the radical jihadists supporting the opposition to Mr. Assad have some distant al-Qaida ties. But wouldn't U.S. bombing support them in a joint effort to end Mr. Assad's regime?

What about U.S. participation in a no-fly zone in Libya based on humanitarian needs?

Doesn't work. The legal basis for that no-fly zone was U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973, adopted March 17, 2011, which imposed "a ban on all flights in the airspace of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in order to help protect civilians." The Security Council also authorized member states who notified the council and League of Arab States, acting nationally or through regional organizations, "to take all necessary measures to enforce compliance."

The reference to "all necessary measures" is "the standard phrase the Security Council uses to authorize states to act militarily," according to a Yale Journal of International Law Online article by

Michael N. Schmitt, a former professor of international law at the U.S. Naval War College.

There's no such resolution for Syria. Without one, or without Congress approving a Syrian resolution, there is no legal basis for U.S. forces striking Syrian targets.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/stories/opinion/perspectives/theres-no-legal-basis-for-striking-syria-685490/>

- **Huge explosion rocks Damascus**

At least 13 people reported killed in car bomb blast in Marjeh district of Syrian capital, says state media.

A blast near Syria's interior ministry has rocked the central Damascus district of Marjeh killing 13 people and injuring over 70 others, state television said, just a day after the country's prime minister survived a car bomb attack.

"Terrorist explosion in Marjeh district of Damascus and preliminary information on

casualties," state television reported on Tuesday.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights gave a lower toll, saying nine people were killed in the blast.

The group, which relies on a network of activists based in Syria, did not immediately provide details on those reported casualties, but warned that the number of casualties was expected to rise.

Sharif Shehadeh, a Syrian member of parliament, told Al Jazeera that "terrorism, sponsored by countries, is harming innocent Syrian civilians....Syria is undermined by terrorism sponsored by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United States."

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey have been at the forefront of backing Syrian armed opposition while the United States has provides "nonlethal aid" to groups fighting Bashar al Assad's regime.

Regarding whether the recent bomb attacks are a response to the government counter-offensive on rebel strongholds, Shehadeh said: "The Syrian army is doing

[an] excellent job in the Damascus suburbs and [the] countryside, as they have directed a big blow to the terrorists in many of the areas they are based in. The Syrian army and state is closing in on them day after day."

Assassination attempt

On Monday a "terrorist" explosion that targeted Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi's envoy in central Damascus damaged cars and caused casualties, state media reported.

The car bomb, which exploded as his convoy passed through the al-Mazzeah upscale neighbourhood, killed one of his bodyguards and five other people, according to the Observatory.

The SOHR said the blast was caused by a car bomb that detonated by the building's back door, adding that there were dead and wounded after the explosion.

Damascus has seen a wave of major bombings in recent weeks, including on April 9, when a massive blast in the centre of the city killed at least 15 people.

News of the blast came as the British charity Oxfam warned the human cost of Syria's conflict had risen beyond all expectations.

In a report, Oxfam said there were already more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. Inside Syria itself, 6.8 million people struggle in urgent need of assistance, it said.

The money to help some of the refugees and displaced people is running out, Oxfam said.

UN appeals have received only half of the funding they sought – to help far fewer people than they now need to assist, according to Oxfam.

And charity's humanitarian programme is struggling with insufficient funds to help as much as it needs to, despite the generosity of its supporters and the public, the report said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/04/201343091045104662.html>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Saudi forces shoot, arrest two activists in Eastern Province**

Saudi security forces have stormed the houses of two anti-government activists in the village of Al-Awamiyah in the Eastern Province, shot them, and arrested them.

The regime forces conducted the raids on Monday.

One of the activists was covered with blood when he was being taken away, according to eyewitness reports.

Saudi activists say one of the detainees is Abdullah al-Suriah, whose name is on the Saudi Interior Ministry's wanted list for allegedly organizing anti-regime protests in the kingdom.

There have been numerous demonstrations in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province since February 2011, with protestors calling for political reform.

Anti-government protests have intensified since November 2011, when security forces opened fire on protestors in Qatif,

killing five people and leaving scores more injured.

Activists say there are over 40,000 political prisoners in Saudi Arabia, many of them being held without trial or charges.

In October 2012, Amnesty International called on the Saudi authorities to stop using excessive force against pro-democracy protestors.

"The Saudi authorities must end their repeated moves to stifle people's attempts to protest against the widespread use of arbitrary detention in the country," Philip Luther, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa, said on October 16.

"The right of people to peaceful protest must be respected and the security forces must refrain from detaining or using excessive force against people who exercise it," he added

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/04/29/300956/saudi-forces-shoot-arrest-two-activists/>

- **Arab League delegates in Washington to push for Mideast peace talks**

AMMAN — An Arab League ministerial delegation was scheduled to meet in Washington with US Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday evening to discuss ways to kick-start the deadlocked Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

A Foreign Ministry source said that the delegation representing the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee, is comprised of Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh and his counterparts from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Morocco as well as a representative of the Palestinian Authority and Arab League Secretary General Nabil El Araby will meet with Kerry.

In remarks to the press on the sidelines of the Arab foreign ministers' preparatory meeting for the 24th Arab summit last month, Judeh said the key mission of the ministerial committee's meeting with Kerry is to revitalise the Arab Peace Initiative in an attempt to end the Palestinian-Israeli peace process impasse.

This Arab peace plan was proposed by Saudi Arabia, and adopted by all Arab leaders attending the 2002 Beirut Arab

summit. The overture offers Israel full diplomatic relations with the Arab world in return for withdrawing from the lands it occupied in 1967 and a workable solution to the refugees' plight.

"Though nothing official has been announced, the delegation, which will be headed by Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Al Thani, is likely to discuss ways to revive the Arab Peace Initiative with Kerry," the source said.

US Department of State Spokesperson Patrick Ventrell was quoted in a department's daily press briefing as saying that the meeting follows Kerry's "productive" visits to the Middle East in April and will "explore how we can best move regional peace efforts forward".

"We welcome the Arab League's eagerness to play a constructive role in the pursuit of a durable and lasting Middle East peace," Ventrell said.

Kerry began his official visit to the Middle East in March and travelled to Jordan, Turkey, Israel, the West Bank, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar.

In March, Judeh held talks with Kerry in Amman and spoke of the importance of backing peace efforts and rejuvenating serious negotiations that will conclude in a two-state solution according to the international terms of reference that will create the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

<http://jordantimes.com/arab-league-delegates-in-washington-to-push-for-mideast-peace-talks>

- **Bahrain Parliament votes to lift MP immunity**

Decision allows investigation into gun brandishing charges

Manama: Bahraini MPs in the lower chamber on Tuesday voted to lift the immunity of a lawmaker, paving the way for the public prosecution to quiz him following a complaint that he brandished a gun in public.

Results of the voting held behind closed doors showed that 17 lawmakers voted for removing the immunity of MP Salman Al Shaikh, while nine voted against it and three abstained.

Last week, the lower chamber's legislative committee recommended lifting the parliamentary protection upon a request from the public prosecution forwarded to the MPs by the justice minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ali Al Khalifa.

Four of the seven committee members voted for lifting the immunity while the other three abstained.

“Removing the immunity does not mean that the lawmaker is guilty,” Ali Hassan Al Ataish, the head of the committee, said. “It is just a measure to allow the public prosecution to probe the complaint. The lawmaker will continue to exercise all his parliamentary rights as usual. We took the decision to remove the immunity after we checked the case documents and listened to the lawmaker. We concluded that the complaint was not malicious and agreed to allow the public prosecution to go ahead with its procedures,” he said.

Al Shaikh, 44, did not deny the possession of the gun, but said that it was licensed by the authorities.

He said that he brandished it in an act of self-defence when he was threatened in an attack.

The request by the public prosecution to have Al Shaikh's parliamentary immunity lifted is the second during the 2010-2014 legislative term.

A similar call was issued in November last year against MP Jasem Al Saeedi, an independent Salafist, for making remarks allegedly fomenting sectarianism.

However, the request was dismissed by his fellow MPs.

In 2009, a request to have Al Saeedi's immunity lifted was also turned down by the lawmakers at the lower chamber.

Al Saeedi is serving his third term in parliament after he was elected in 2002, 2006 and 2010.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-parliament-votes-to-lift-mp-immunity-1.1177263>

- **Khalifa's UK visit to boost bilateral ties**



Shaikh Khalifa with Queen Elizabeth during her UAE visit in 2010. — Waz

THE UAE and the UK are expected to sign three agreements, including one on setting up a green bank for environment-friendly projects during the President, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to the country which begins today.

The UAE economic delegation is headed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, CEO and Chairman of The Emirates Group and Chairman of Dubai World, Shaikha Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of Development and International Cooperation, Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of Federal National Council Affairs, and Dr Sultan bin Ahmed Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of State,

who is also CEO and managing director of Masdar.

“UAE-UK relations are improving, and three agreements will be signed between the two countries,” said Dr Anwar Gargash. The green bank is one such partnership and there is also an agreement on metrology, he said. Bilateral ties are looking good and the agreements will go a long way in cementing the relationship, the minister said.

Speaking to Khaleej Times, Dr Sultan Al Jaber shed light on the proposed Green Investment Bank, which will finance green energy projects in Britain. It will grant suitable financing facilities for sustainable energy projects like the London Array Offshore Wind Farm project — the biggest wind-generating energy project in the world — which is 30 per cent owned by Masdar. The \$2.4 billion mega development will be launched on July 5 and is now in its pilot phase.

Shaikh Khalifa begins his official visit on Tuesday on the invitation of Queen Elizabeth. This is the first official visit made by a UAE President to the United Kingdom since the late Shaikh Zayed bin

Sultan Al Nahyan visited the country in 1989.

The strong ties between the UAE and Britain have contributed to maintaining world peace, and bilateral trade is expected to reach Dh70 billion in 2015.

Foreign Minister Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said: “We look forward to further focus on strengthening cooperation between the two countries and companies of the two parties in other places of the world, whether at the level of the economy or politics, defence or even on the level of assistance to developing countries.”

Tourism between the two countries is booming and 50,000 Britons visit the UAE annually, according to statistics, while 100,000 British expats live and work in the country. The value of Emirati investments in Britain is worth more than five billion pounds and provides 35,000 jobs.

“We aspire to a further influx of British companies and educational institutions. Britain can take advantage of the new opportunities available in Abu Dhabi and the rest of the UAE and to contribute at

the same time as partners in the renaissance of our country," Shaikh Abdullah said earlier.

"We in the UAE are watching closely what is happening in Britain at the level of business and economics as well as the political level. That is important for us and we are working to identify more potential partners in the economic boom."

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/nationgeneral/2013/April/nationgeneral_April583.xml§ion=nationgeneral

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **37 militants killed in Afghanistan within day: gov't**

KABUL, April 29 (Xinhua) -- Thirty-seven Taliban militants have been killed in deferent operations within the last 24 hours across Afghanistan, said the country's Interior Ministry on Monday morning.

"The Afghan National Police (ANP) supported by the army and the NATO-led coalition forces conducted several cleanup

operations in Nangarhar, Baghlan, Kandahar, Zabul, Wardak, Ghazni and Paktika provinces, killing 37 armed Taliban over the past 24 hours," the ministry said in a statement.

Up to 13 militants were wounded and 11 were detained by ANP, the statement said, adding the ANP also found and seized weapons and explosive during the raids.

Figures released by the Afghan Interior Ministry showed more than 230 insurgents had been killed, 81 wounded and nearly 200 others detained during operations over the past one month across the country.

The Taliban insurgent group, which has been waging an insurgency of more than one decade, has yet to make comments.

On Saturday, the Taliban announced that they would start the annual spring operation codenamed "Khalid bin Waleed," the name of a general in Islamic history, from Sunday.

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

- **Gun battle leaves 8 Afghan Taliban fighters dead**

HERAT, Afghanistan, April 29 (Xinhua)-- Eight Taliban militants were killed and two others made captive as fighting flared up late Sunday in Kohsan district of Afghanistan's Herat province, 640 km west of Kabul, provincial police chief Rahmatullah Safi said Monday.

"Units of police launched operations against Taliban militants in Kohsan district late Sunday night. The operations lasted for few hours during which eight rebels had been killed and two others were captured,"Safi told Xinhua.

The operations was launched in the wake of abducting a police personnel, he said, adding the kidnapped policeman had been rescued safe and sound.

However, the police official did not say if there were any casualties on police personnel. The Taliban outfit has yet to make comment.

Taliban militants fighting the government and NATO-led forces in Afghanistan announced Saturday to launch their spring offensive codenamed "Khalid Bin Waleed"

from April 28 and since then the militants have intensified their activities.

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

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM research assistant **Miray Başar**. 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.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM araştırma asistanı **Miray Başar** tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*