



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

The Restructuring Procces of Iraq

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7 May 2013

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1. IRAQ

- **MP: National Alliance's discussion for amnesty prove goodwill towards the demonstrators**

BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, of the Iraqiya coalition, Etab al-Duri considered the discussion of the general amnesty law in a meeting of the National Alliance on last Sunday as a step toward proving goodwill on implementing the legitimate demands of the demonstrators.

He said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA /: "The general amnesty law among the most important demands of the demonstrators in the western regions, and the seriousness shown by the National Alliance to approve it will contribute in reducing the tension happening in those areas."

She stressed "the need to activate this law and to include it in the next parliament sessions for approval" calling on members of the House of Representatives to vote in majority on the law to achieve social justice. "

The Iraqi National Alliance discussed, at a meeting held on Sunday, under the

chairmanship of Ibrahim al-Jaafari issuing the general amnesty law.

A statement to the National Alliance said: "The alliance, with all its members, met in the office of President Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and discussed the political situation and its developments."

"The meeting discussed the issuance of the amnesty law and they stressed not to include the terrorists who participated in the killings and bombings in this law,

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

- **Iraqiya spokeswoman: al-Maliki pushes Iraqis to separate and division**

BAGHDAD / NINA / MP, of the Iraqiya coalition, Maysoon al-Damaloji said that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki pushes the Iraqis to separate and establish regions.

Al-Damaloji, the spokeswoman of the Iraqiya told the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA /: "Maliki is pushing Iraq to the division clearly and he is implementing Biden's scheme.

She pointed out that "al-Maliki lacks the ABC policy, if he tried to read the history of Iraq in the era of Nuri Said and Abd al-Karim Qasim and other political figures who tried to keep Iraq united not like what Maliki does now".

She added that the establishment of the regions is useless because it aims to tear the unity of Iraq and the head of the government should reconsider the implementation of the demands of the demonstrators in the Iraqi governorates.

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

- **Motahedoon alliances in Baghdad Council are not yet clear**

BAGHDAD / NINA / A member of the Baghdad new Provincial Council, of Motahedoon coalition, Aisha al-Mesari said that her coalition's alliances with other lists in the new provincial council is not yet clear.

She said in a statement to the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA /: "There are no negotiations held with other blocs about alliances for the coming period so far, and there will be a meeting with the political blocs

to agree on the form of the Council during the coming period."

She explained: "The work of the new council may not differ from the previous one because most of the blocs in the provincial council will be present at the next Council", expressing the hope that the level of services provided to the people of the province will be better than before.

She stressed that "Motahedoon winners candidates in the new council will meet the promises made to their voters in particular and people of the province in general."

It is mentioned that Mesari won a seat in the Baghdad Provincial Council for the second session after gaining the highest number of votes among the female candidates, which was almost 11 thousands votes

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

- **Allawi holds the government responsibility of Abu Kalal assassination**

Shafaq News / The Head of the United al-Iraqiya Alliance, Iyad Allawi hold on Monday,

the Iraqi government responsibility for the assassination of the candidates' list in Kirkuk and the leader of the National Accord Movement , Mazin Abu Kalal, demanding the security forces to opened an investigation in this matter.

“We condemn the heinous assassination of our brother, Mazen Abu Kalal, the candidate (of al-Iraqiya coalition list in Kirkuk),” Allawi said in a statement received by “Shafaq News”.

Allawi considered the assassination of (Abu Kalal) as targeting national symbols especially as the number of innocent martyrs from the list of al-Iraqiya coalition in particular of the candidates of the National Accord Movement reached since the election so far to 18 martyrs, which is a clear attempt to silence the voices against injustice, corruption and authoritarianism”.

Abu Kalal was killed on Sunday evening; he is the head of National Accord Movement – a political movement in Iraq- in Kirkuk by a bombing that targeted the headquarters of the movement in the city center.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/politics/6018-allawi-holds-the-government-responsibility-of-abu-kalal-assassination.html>

• **Iraqi President Comes out of Coma**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iraq's President Jalal Talabani has come back to life after being in a coma for several months, sources revealed on Monday.



"President Talabani has come back from coma," unofficial sources close to the medical team in charge of his health and treatment said on Monday.

No official source in Baghdad has yet confirmed the report.

Talabani was transferred to a Baghdad hospital in mid December after he suffered a stroke. He was transferred to Germany for further medical treatment a few days later.

Less than a week later, some media outlets alleged that Talabani had died in a Baghdad hospital after the stroke. But Iraq's presidential office denied the reports, saying that "the reports about Talabani's death are not true, and his condition is stable."

Meantime, Talabani's wife Hiro Ahmed Ibrahim arrived in Tehran at the head of a high-ranking delegation on Sunday.

The visit by Ahmed Ibrahim, who is heading a senior delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), takes place at the official invitation of the Iranian government.

Hiro Ibrahim is due to hold several meetings with senior Iranian officials to discuss bilateral ties and regional developments.

No further details have yet been released on the specific goals and agenda of the visit.

When the Iraqi president was hospitalized in December, almost all senior Iranian officials contacted Iraq's First Lady and other Baghdad officials to get briefed on Talabani's health conditions and offer medical and other needed aids to Baghdad.

Observers believe that the recovery of Talabani, a Kurd icon representing Iraq's Kurdish population in the government, will have strongly positive influence on soothing the ongoing ethnic and sectarian unrests in Iraq.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107167704>

- **Bomb explosion kills 10, injures dozens in Iraq's capital Baghdad**

At least ten people have been killed and dozens injured after a series of bomb explosions targeted Iraq's capital city of Baghdad.



Four people were killed in the capital's southern Dora neighborhood after a bomb exploded near a restaurant. Nearly a dozen others were wounded in the blast.

Two car bombs also went off near police checkpoints in the north of the capital, where one policeman and several civilians were killed and dozens were also injured.

The attacks come a day after nine people were killed and dozens injured in a series of bomb explosions in and around Baghdad.

On Thursday, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said that April 2013 was Iraq's deadliest month since June 2008, with a total of 712 people killed and 1,633 wounded in bomb attacks and other forms of violence.

Almost 600 of the victims are reported to be civilians and the rest were members of Iraqi security forces.

The mission also said Baghdad was the worst affected governorate with a total of 211 killed and 486 injured.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/06/302134/bomb-explosion-kills-10-in-baghdad/>

2. IRAN

• Iranian FM in Jordan to Discuss Bilateral Ties, Syria

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi left Tehran for Amman late Monday to discuss bilateral ties and mutual cooperation as well as regional developments with the Jordanian officials.



During his visit to Jordan, the two sides will discuss Tehran-Amman bilateral relations and regional developments, Syria in particular.

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast had informed earlier that his boss would soon pay a visit to Jordan to discuss the latest developments in Syria with Jordanian officials.

"Given the Islamic Republic of Iran's rotating presidency over the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the need for continued consultations and utilization of regional capacities for the settlement of the current crisis in Syria through a political solution and

national Syrian-Syrian talks, the Iranian foreign minister will depart for the Jordanian capital, Amman, soon," Mehman-Parast announced on Sunday.

"Given the outstanding roles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Jordan, Salehi will meet senior Jordanian officials during his two-day visit to Amman to discuss a new round of constructive and coordinated efforts by influential regional states to help Syria come out of the current crisis," he added.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011 with organized attacks by well-armed gangs against Syrian police forces and border guards being reported across the country.

Hundreds of people, including members of the security forces, have been killed, when some protest rallies turned into armed clashes.

The government blames outlaws, saboteurs, and armed terrorist groups for the deaths, stressing that the unrest is being orchestrated from abroad.

In October 2011, calm was almost restored in the Arab state after President Assad started a reform initiative in the country, but Israel, the

US and its Arab allies sought hard to bring the country into chaos through any possible means. Tel Aviv, Washington and some Arab capitals have been staging various plots to topple President Bashar al-Assad, who is well known in the world for his anti-Israeli stances.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107167878>

- **Supreme Leader Urges Muslims to Continue Protests at Sacrilege of Sanctities**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei strongly condemned the recent desecration of the shrine of a highly revered Shiite figure in Syria by Wahhabi extremists, and called on all Muslims across the world to continue their protests against the sacrilege of Islamic sanctities.



Addressing a large number of Iranian officials in Tehran on Monday, the Supreme Leader praised the Sunni Muslims' reaction to the Wahhabi extremists' attack on the mausoleum of Hojr ibn Oday, one of the close companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), in the Damascus suburb of Adra, and said their protest displayed the high level of their vigilance and deep insight.

"Muslims' reaction to this bitter accident and condemnation of this move should continue because if scientific figures, intellectuals and political elites of the Islamic Ummah don't fulfill their duty, conspiracies will not stop at this limit," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

He said that Muslim intellectuals and scholars should prevent any further spread of such plots by means of political methods, religious fatwas (decrees), articles and other peaceful measures.

Ayatollah Khamenei referred to the clear footprints of enemies revealed in such sacrilegious moves, and blamed those who have kept silent on the development, saying, "International organizations and figures as well as those politicians who mourn for the destruction of an ancient artifact, have kept mum about this flagrant insult."

Armed rebels affiliated to the Wahhabi extremists attacked the mausoleum of Hojr ibn Oday in the Damascus suburb of Adra last week and exhumed his grave taking his remains to an unknown location.

The Nusra Front, affiliated to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, has taken up the responsibility for the desecration of Oday's grave.

Hojr was a staunch supporter of the first Shiite Imam Ali (PBUH) and led the army of Muslims to victory in several crucial battles. He and his sons finally fell victim to their loyalty to Imam Ali (PBUH) and were murdered at the order of the Umayyad Caliph Muawiyah in the year 660 CE.

Yet, the Wahhabi extremist groups continued their desecration of Shiite sanctities and damaged the mausoleum of another highly revered Shiite figure in Jordan on Saturday.

The Wahhabis attacked the mausoleum of Ja'far al-Tayyar, a close companion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the brother of Shiite Islam's first Imam, and torched his grave in Karak province in Southern Jordan today.

The sacrilege of Islamic sanctities has aroused intense feelings in Muslim lands, specially in Shiite communities.

In Yemen, leader of the Houthi Movement Seyed Abdelmalik Al-Houthi in a statement on Saturday condemned the desecration of Hojr's shrine.

"This action which has been done in line with the Zionists' criminal plots seeks to increase religious intolerances," the leader of Yemen's Houthi Movement said.

Al-Houthi described the desecration of Hojr as an immoral and inhumane action.

In Iran, Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani in a message condemned the sacrilege of Islam's religious sanctities.

In his message, the speaker condemned "the Syrian terrorists' new crime of desecrating and exhuming the grave of Hojr ibn Oday".

Larijani called on the UN and UNESCO to take the necessary action to prevent the destruction of Muslims' religious and cultural sites.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian also strongly condemned the desecration of the shrine of a prominent Shiite figure in Syria by Wahhabi extremists.

Amir Abdollahian said that the perpetrators of such ugly acts are affiliated to the Zionist regime who have conducted similar attempts at holy Muslim sites in the occupied territories

The Iranian deputy foreign minister warned the masterminds of such inhumane acts that they will receive a response that will make them sorry for what they have done.

Also, large groups of Iranian seminary students and teachers staged protest gatherings in Tehran and Qom on Saturday to strongly condemn the Wahhabi extremists' insult to Shiite Islam.

Seminary students and teachers convened at the shrine of Hazrat Abdolazim Hassani in Southern Tehran on Saturday reading a message of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, who condemned the sacrilegious act. The protesters also chanted slogans against the perpetrators and their Wahhabi supporters. They also issued a statement

condemning the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) for conducting such shameful acts.

In a similar move in Qom, the seminary students and teachers gathered in the city's Feyzieh seminary school today and condemned desecration of Hojr ibn Oday.

They read the messages of Grand Ayatollahs Golpayegani and Makarem Shirazi who condemned the desecration of Hojr ibn Oday's shrine.

Reports from Iraq also said that similar moves had been done by Shiite seminaries in the holy city of Najaf.

Earlier this week, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki also condemned the desecration of the grave of Hojr by foreign-backed terrorists.

In a statement issued by his office, Maliki described the attack as a "mean act" that targeted the unity among Muslims.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107167766>

- **IRGC Official Stresses Iran's Crushing Response to Threats**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A senior official of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps underlined IRGC's preparedness to confront any possible threat, and warned that the Islamic Republic will give a crushing response to potential aggressors.

"The IRGC is ready to defend the country and confront the enemies' threats proportionately," Head of IRGC's Public Relations General Ramezan Sharif said on Sunday.

He noted that Iran's achievements in the defense field have frightened the enemies.

Last month, IRGC Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari said that the Iranian Armed Forces have the necessary capabilities to bring into action the Supreme Leader's warnings to enemies.

"The deterrent warnings of the Supreme Leader of the (Islamic) Revolution to enemies are serious and based on the capacities and reality of the Islamic Iran's defensive power," Jafari said, addressing Iranian border guards units in the country's Northwestern regions.

Addressing a large and fervent congregation of the Iranian people in the country's Northeastern holy city of Mashhad on March

21, Ayatollah Khamenei deplored Israel's war rhetoric against Iran, and warned that any hostile move by the Zionist regime against the Islamic Republic would be reciprocated with a destructive response.

Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the recent warmongering statements by Israeli officials and warned Tel Aviv against any wrongdoing against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Israel's leaders sometimes threaten Iran, but they know that if they do a damn thing, the Islamic Republic will raze Tel Aviv and Haifa to the ground," Ayatollah Khamenei stressed.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107167694>

- **Portuguese Consortium to Partner Iran in Railway, Highway Construction**

TEHRAN (FNA)- A Portuguese consortium has struck an agreement with Iran to make investments in mega development projects in the Southern Iranian Fars province, specially its railway and road construction projects, a provincial official announced on Monday.

Director-General of Fars province's Road and Urbanization Houshang Ashayeri pointed to his recent meeting with officials of Portugal's Contatco Atlantico Consortium, and said that the consortium has been commissioned to implement four big development projects in the province.

The four construction projects include Shiraz-Ahwaz railway, Shiraz-Bushehr highway, Shiraz-Sadra highway and Bezin commercial and residential complex, he explained.

Last year, Iran's National Development Fund (NDF) announced that it would provide 70 percent of the financial needs of the foreign companies willing to invest in Iran if they bring 30 percent of the needed funds.

NDF's deputy and its consultant for investment in the oil and gas sector, Mohammad Mazreati, said the NDF facilities to foreign investors belong to all economic sectors, including oil, gas, agriculture, industry, mine and services.

Mazreati said the fund's activities in not confined to an especial sector and NDF tries to lay the groundwork for sustainable development in the country through long-

term investments in all sectors of the economy.

He said NDF would examine technical and economic aspects of the plans and after their confirmation by agent banks, the fund will pay the facilities under the investment regulations of the country.

"NDF is examining so many requests have been made by foreign investors for getting facilities," Mazreati said.

He went on to say that NDF also plans to cooperate with Japan Economic Cooperation Organization on optimizing energy consumption in our country under which, as the first step, the organization will examine energy conservation at all Iranian governmental buildings in cooperation with domestic and foreign private companies.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9107167826>

- **Hopefuls start signing up for Iran's presidential polls**

The registration of hopefuls for Iran's 11th presidential election, which is due on June 14, has officially begun.

The official registration began on Tuesday morning on the order of the Iranian Interior Ministry.

Hopefuls have five days, until May 11, to sign up for the presidential election.

More than 20 political figures from across Iran's political spectrum have so far announced their intention to run for president, with the majority being from the principlist camp.

Among the hopefuls are Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, and lawmaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, who make up the Coalition of Three; former Interior Minister Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi, deputy Majlis Speakers Mohammad Reza Bahonar and Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard; head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines Yahya Al-e Eshaq; and former Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, who have formed the Coalition of Five.

Director of the Iranian Expediency Council's Center for Strategic Research Hassan Rohani, former Health Minister Kamran Bagheri Lankarani, Secretary of Iran's Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaei, former Minister of Commerce Mohammad Shariatmadari and former First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref, Roads and Urban Development Minister Ali Nikzad and lawmaker Alireza Zakani are also among the hopefuls.

Iran's Constitution stipulates that presidential candidates be of Iranian origin, have Iranian citizenship, be religious or political figures, have managerial skills, have no criminal record, be trustworthy and pious, and have firm belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the country's official religion.

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

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302229/election-registration-starts-in-iran/>

- **Iran censures Kenyan court ruling on two Iranian nationals**



Iran has criticized a Kenyan court for handing down life sentences to two Iranian nationals over unfounded charges, calling for a “serious review” of the verdict.

A Kenyan court on Monday sentenced the two Iranians to life in prison over the unfounded allegation of “involvement in terrorist activities.”

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said on Tuesday, “These two Iranians entered Kenya last year with valid visas and for tourism purposes, and were arrested over false charges and based on a pre-meditated scenario on June 19, 2012.”

“This unfortunate event occurred after the successful trip of Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi to Kenya in May 2012,” Mehmanparast said.

He added that the ill-wishers and arrogant powers have a record of making such moves

after successful visits by Iranian officials to friendly countries.

The Iranian official expressed regret over the issue and said the verdict was unjust.

Mehmanparast also touched upon the prospering relations between Iran and Kenya and said that Tehran expected the government of Kenyan President Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta to conduct an independent review of the issue, acquit and rehabilitate the two Iranians.

Meanwhile, David Kirimi, the lawyer of one of the two Iranians convicted in Kenya, said after the court session that he would appeal against the ruling.

“The decision is outrageous. It is wrong. It is illegal. It is a nullity. The magistrate has totally misconceived the law,” Kirimi stated.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302225/iran-censures-kenyan-court-ruling/>

Iran’s presidential hopefuls detail plans in various fields

Some of the Iranian presidential hopefuls have elaborated on their objectives as president of

the Islamic Republic if elected in the June 14 election, Press TV reports.

In a number of Q-and-A sessions held on Monday, the hopefuls outlined their policies regarding different subjects.

Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who is a member of the principlist Coalition of Three, said the Islamic Republic needs to generate science so it can remain independent because this would create wealth and power for the country.

Qalibaf also made remarks regarding the unrest following the 2009 presidential election.

“In previous years, I have always tried not to have double-standard policies. I have always tried to speak the truth, and accordingly some people have called me leftist, and others have called me rightist only because I have defended the truth,” he stated.

The Coalition of Three brings together Qalibaf, former Foreign Minister, Ali-Akbar Velayati and lawmaker Haddad-Adel.

Meanwhile, reformist presidential hopeful Hassan Rohani said at a session at Tehran

University that he would welcome Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, two former presidents, if they decide to run up for election.

Hashemi Rafsanjani has said he is currently assessing the situation before making up his mind to enter the upcoming presidential election.

Elsewhere, Rohani made comments about duties of the administration, which is responsible for holding the election saying, “One of the main duties of the incumbent administration is to create a healthy and proper atmosphere for people to vote. In order to create such conditions, all the officials should encourage people from all walks of life to take part in a free and competitive election because if people feel that voting for any candidate will not make any difference, this will become problematic.”

Mohammad Reza Bahonar, who is a member of the principlist Coalition of Five, criticized the economic situation of the country saying the sanctions are to be blamed for thirty per cent of the country’s unemployment and inflation, and the remaining seventy per cent is a result of mismanagement.

The Coalition of Five includes former Interior Minister Mostafa Pour-Mohammadi; deputy Majlis Speakers Mohammad-Reza Bahonar and Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard, head of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines Yahya Al-e Eshaq and former Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki.

The official registration of hopefuls for Iran’s 11th presidential election begins on May 7 and ends on May 11.

The Iranian Constitution stipulates that presidential candidates must be religious or political figures, be Iranian in origin, have Iranian citizenship, have resourcefulness and managerial skills, have no criminal record, be trustworthy and pious, and have firm belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the country’s official religion.

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

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302203/iran-hopefuls-elaborate-on-plans/>

- **‘Iran nuclear plan clear, operational’**

TEHRAN, May 6 (MNA) – Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman says reaching to an agreement with P5+1, provided that it is in NPT framework is becoming closer.

Ramin Mehmanparast said that a meeting had been arranged for Jalili and Ashton in May 15th in Istanbul, Turkey. “In the final round of talks in Almaty, Kazakhstan, P5+1 had proposed plans and demands on Iran’s nuclear program. A midway meeting was held to begin the cooperation as a step forward to solve Iran’s nuclear program issue, where we proposed an operational and detailed plan,” explained Mehmanparast.

“The P5+1 representative stated their need to council with their relevant governments, and it was agreed that Ashton would inform Jalili of the result,” said he, and believed that Iran’s waiting would be indication of its rational approach which would hammer out an agreement between two sides.

“The optimum way to reach a desired outcome is the recognition by the P5+1 of our nuclear rights,” he added. “According to NPT regulations, we have been adhered to our commitments, and would protect Iranian

people’s rights to enjoy nuclear science for peaceful purpose of development of the country,” he asserted.

The Spokesman for the diplomatic body also added that “P5+1 might have doubts and concerns, but we could reach an accord to lessen their concerns and doubts in the agreement framework, if our nuclear rights are recognized.”

Mehmanparast stressed that Iran expected that negotiations should not be delayed, and having the logical framework of the negotiations, we discuss the operational plans according to NPT framework.

He also pointed to phone call between Iran’s FM and his Egyptian counterpart about quadrilateral negotiations of Iran, Egypt, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia on Syrian crisis. “Mr. Morsi proposed the four-sided plan to solve the crisis. Meetings were held, some in Foreign Ministry and experts levels. President-level negotiations were held in Cairo and Islamabad with three countries participating,” explained he.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman commented on relations with the US. “The US should abandon enmity toward Iran, if it is to have a

relationship, which both sides benefit from,” he added. He also pointed to the Supreme Leader’s remarks, who said that Iran was not optimistic about the US, neither had it had opposition.

“The very negotiation is possible, but it is very crucial that when the negotiation takes place and whether it is benefiting us,” he asserted.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1821335>

- **High turnout in presidential poll will guarantee the country’s progress: Leader**

TEHRAN – Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called on the Iranian people to turn out in large numbers for the upcoming presidential election, saying a high turnout will guarantee that the country continues to make progress.

The Leader made the remarks in Tehran on Monday during a meeting with a number of organizers of the 11th presidential election and the fourth city council elections, which are scheduled to be held simultaneously on June 14.



Candidates registered for the city council elections from April 15 to 21, and the registration of candidates for the presidential election starts today and ends on May 11.

In his speech, Ayatollah Khamenei said that the people’s participation in the presidential election will consolidate the foundations of the Islamic system.

“Certain people made efforts to dampen enthusiasm for the election, or delay it, but, through the grace of God, they failed and will get nowhere in the future,” he added.

He also stated that a president must be conscientious and prudent and must uphold values, stand up to the enemies, and abide by the law.

In addition, the Leader called on those tasked with organizing and conducting the election to fulfill their responsibilities effectively to prevent electoral irregularities from occurring.

Ayatollah Khamenei condemns desecration of sahaba's tomb in Syria

Elsewhere in his remarks, Ayatollah Khamenei condemned the recent desecration of the tomb of Hujr ibn Adi, a close companion (sahaba) of Prophet Mohammad (S), by Syrian rebels in the Damascus suburb of Adra.

He also criticized the international organizations that have remained silent about the incident.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/107450-high-turnout-in-presidential-poll-will-guarantee-the-countrys-progress-leader>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israeli forces detain 10 Palestinians in West Bank**

Israeli forces have raided Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank city of Bethlehem, detaining 10 Palestinians including teenagers.



The detainees, who were arrested on Monday, were taken to an unknown location and have had no contact with their families so far.

Israeli sources claim the Palestinians were carrying knives while in the vicinity of an Israeli settlement without offering any proof for the claim.

Local sources say lawyers have also been unable to reach the detainees.

Israel occupied the West Bank as well as East al-Quds (Jerusalem), which Palestinians consider the capital of their homeland, during the Six-Day War in 1967.

The Israeli military regularly raids Palestinians' houses in the West Bank arresting activists and civilians, mostly without any charges. Many Palestinians remain under detention in Israeli prisons, where they are given minimal access to their basic rights.

Many of the inmates are under so-called administrative detention.

The administrative detention, often implemented by the Israeli regime against the Palestinian population, is a sort of imprisonment without trial or charges, allowing regime forces to make arrests without formal charges for up to six months. However, the detention order can be renewed for indefinite periods of time.

Palestinian prisoners have been subject to human rights violations such as torture during interrogations by Israeli prison authorities.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/06/302138/israeli-forces-arrest-10-palestinians/>

- **'Netanyahu orders freeze of West Bank settlement tenders'**

Army Radio reports that amid US efforts to renew peace talks, PM orders Housing Minister Ariel to freeze plans for West Bank building; Bayit Yehudi has threatened not to support budget if settlements not supported.



Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has ordered a freeze in tenders for West Bank settlement construction amid a US push to renew the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Army Radio reported Tuesday.

Netanyahu reportedly gave the order in a meeting with Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel (Bayit Yehudi).

The reported freeze came as the country is under international pressure not to advance West Bank settlement projects, including those that were direct responses to unilateral Palestinian statehood efforts at the United Nations, such as the unbuilt area of Ma'aleh Adumim known as E1.

Army Radio quoted a government clerk as saying "most of the tenders are prepared and ready to be issued at any minute."

While neither Netanyahu nor Ariel immediately responded to the report, Bayit Yehudi MK Ayelet Shaked was quoted by Army

Radio as saying that "the Housing and Construction Ministry has prepared tenders that it is interested in issuing in the West Bank settlement blocs. They require the prime minister's signature, and for some reason that is not happening. It's a shame, there are many housing units ready to be tendered."

Last week, Ariel warned that Bayit Yehudi would not support the 2013 budget in the Knesset unless construction projects in West Bank settlements are fully funded.

"I turned to the prime minister today and warned him that if the 2013 budget doesn't include full funding for building projects in Judea and Samaria, including those decided upon in reaction to the Palestinians' unilateral statehood bid at the United Nations [this past fall] and additional projects, Bayit Yehudi will consider its coalition agreement as having been violated, and it won't support the budget unless a solution is found for the promised funds," Ariel said.

International pressure to freeze settlement building has only grown stronger now that the Arab League has modified its 2002 peace plan to include minor land swaps – a move that is seen as a possible prelude to renewed negotiations.

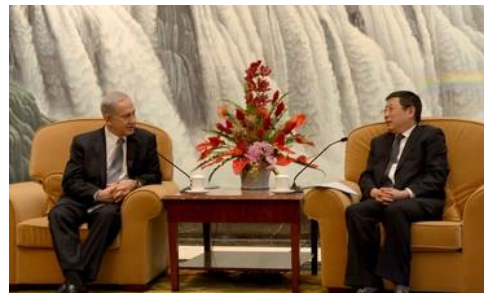
Palestinians have also told the US that they won't attempt to pursue Israel at the International Criminal Court as long as Israel refrains from moving forward on the E1 project of 3,500 new Jewish homes.

Coalition chairman Yariv Levin (Likud) said last week that "Likud Beytenu is obligated to the settlement enterprise. We will insist that the new budget strengthens the settlements and ensures their development."

Ariel's spokesman said in response that the minister would not have made such a threat unless he had reason to believe

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Netanyahu-orders-freeze-of-West-Bank-settlement-tenders-312323>

- **PM declares Israel's strength at Chinese Jewish quarter**



SHANGHAI-Just days after allegations that Israel attacked Syria, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Tuesday morning in China that unlike 70 years ago, today Israel "can defend ourselves."

Netanyahu's comments came during a tour of the historic Jewish quarters in Shanghai where some 18,000 Jews sought refuge during World War II.

The fate of the Jews has changed a great deal since the time the Jewish refugees found shelter in this city, Netanyahu said. "70 years ago we could only plead, only beg to be saved," he said. "Today we have a state of our own, an army of our own. We need not beg to be saved, we can defend ourselves."

From the Jewish quarter, Netanyahu was scheduled to meet with the mayor of Shanghai.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday issued a four-point proposal for peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Chinese news agency Xinhau reported that the proposal was made during a meeting between Jinping and Palestinian Authority

President Mahmoud Abbas, who is currently visiting Beijing.

The four-point proposal, according to the agency, calls for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state and peaceful coexistence with Israel.

But on Monday, rather than dealing with questions regarding the Syrians or the Palestinians, Netanyahu immersed himself in trying to push forward Israeli-Sino economic cooperation.

At a reception Monday evening in Shanghai with Chinese and Israeli businesspeople, Netanyahu said the "spectacular" city of Shanghai represented "the future of China and the entire world, and I believe that Israel can be part of this future."

According to Netanyahu, "The future belongs to countries that are capable of manufacturing intellectual property" and to those that "lead in innovation and technology."

"Israel is not as big as China," he said. "We have 8 million residents, approximately one-third the population of Shanghai. But we manufacture more intellectual property than any other country in the world in relation to

its size. If we create a partnership between Israel's inventive capability and China's manufacturing capability, we will have a winning combination."

Earlier in the evening he met with Israeli businesspeople representing companies operating in Shanghai, who told him of the importance of Israeli government backing when breaking into the centralized and government-controlled Chinese market. Netanyahu said he intended to give them that backing.

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/PM-declares-Israelis-strength-at-Chinese-Jewish-quarter-312316>

- **Israel issues demolition orders to 11 Ramallah homes**



RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- Israeli forces issued demolition orders to 11 homes in a Ramallah village on Monday, homeowners told Ma'an.

Military forces raided the village of Deir Nidham, located around 2km south of Nabi Saleh, and issued demolition orders to Ahmad Tamimi, his sons Abdul-Raziq, Hasan and Mahmoud, and their cousins Kafour, Abdul-Hafizh, Salih, Mustafa and Haitham Tamimi.

Israeli forces also issued Abdul-Kashif Tamimi with a stop-work order for his house, which is currently under construction.

Around 40 people will be made homeless if the demolition orders are carried out.

The homes slated for demolition are located opposite the Israeli settlement of Hallamish. The majority of the homes were built before the illegal settlement was founded, locals said.

Israel is planning to expand the settlement at the expense of the indigenous landowners, locals told Ma'an.

Village youths threw stones at Israeli soldiers as they entered the village, who responded with tear gas canisters and stun grenades.

Israel has adopted a policy of mass demolition of Palestinian homes in Area C, Israeli rights group B'Tselem says.

According to the group, Israel has destroyed more than 2,200 homes in the past 10 years in the occupied West Bank, leaving more than 13,000 Palestinians homeless.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=592916>

- **Israel approves plan to displace Negev Bedouins**



BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Israel approved a draft law on Monday to implement a plan which will displace thousands of Bedouins in the Negev desert, an Israeli rights group said.

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation approved a bill which outlines a framework for

implementing the Praver-Begin plan, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel said.

"Today the government approved a plan that will cause the displacement and forced eviction of dozens of villages and tens of thousands of Bedouin residents," ACRI lawyer Rawia Aburabia said.

"All of this while the government simultaneously promotes the establishment of new Jewish communities, some of which are even planned to be built on the fresh ruins of Bedouin villages," she added.

The Israeli government approved the plan in 2011, in what it says was an attempt to address the problem of unrecognized Bedouin villages in the Negev desert of southern Israel.

The 2011 proposal was formulated without any consultation with the Bedouin community and rights groups slammed it as a major blow to Bedouin rights.

Bedouins protest

The Regional Council of Unrecognized Arab Villages of Negev along with the High Steering Committee of the Arabs of Negev organized Monday a demonstration near office of Israeli

prime minister in Jerusalem protesting approval of the recommendations.

Knesset member Ibrahim Sarsour addressed the demonstrators confirming that his party, the United Arab List, rejected the recommendations. He expressed concern that the recommendations might be approved as a law and urged the Arab public to use legal means to try and prevent such a step.

Talab Abu Arar, another lawmaker, echoed Sarsour's remarks but appealed to "the rational people on the Israeli side to treat the Arabs wisely giving them their rights, recognizing their unrecognized villages, and involving them in the planning process."

He warned the Israelis against being driven by "racist and extremist blocs in the Knesset."

"Approval of the Prawer committee recommendations means Judaisation of Negev. The main goal of these plans is to seize Arab lands and exterminate Arab roots," said head of the Regional Council of Unrecognized Arab Villages of Negev Atiyeh al-A'sam.

According to ACRI, the plan will forcibly evict nearly 40,000 Bedouins and destroy their communal and social fabric, condemning

them to a future of poverty and unemployment.

Israel refuses to recognize 35 Bedouin villages in the Negev, which collectively house nearly 90,000 people.

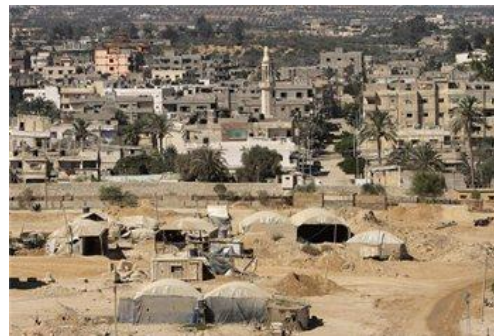
The Israeli state denies them access to basic services and infrastructure, such as electricity and running water, and refuses to place them under municipal jurisdiction.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=592835>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Egypt uncovers 276 smuggling tunnels under Gaza border**

CAIRO (Ma'an) -- Egyptian forces uncovered 276 previously unknown smuggling tunnels under the border with Gaza on Monday.



Egyptian security officials told Ma'an that 154 tunnels had been destroyed and 94 would be demolished soon. Security forces are struggling to destroy some 28 tunnels constructed under residential properties.

All the tunnel openings have been blocked temporarily with rocks, security sources added.

Israel imposed its blockade for what it called security reasons in 2007. The United Nations has appealed for it to be lifted.

At one stage an estimated 2,500-3,000 tunnels snaked their way under the desert fence but the network has shrunk markedly since 2010, when Israel eased some of the limits they imposed on imports into the coastal enclave.

All goods still have to be screened before entering Gaza and Israel says some restrictions must remain on items that could be used to make or to store weapons.

This ensures the tunnels are still active, particularly to bring in building materials. Hamas also prefers using the tunnels to smuggle in fuel, thereby avoiding custom dues that are payable on oil crossing via Israel.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=592768>

- **Libya passes political isolation law**

Libya's General National Congress (GNC) on Sunday (May 5th) overwhelmingly approved a controversial law barring members of the Kadhafi regime from serving in government.

The political isolation law was passed with 164 votes in favour to four against, with congress under pressure from armed militias and protestors, who continue to besiege key government ministries in the capital.

On Monday, militia leaders occupying the foreign ministry told AFP that they were demanding the interim government resign.

"We are determined to continue our movement until the departure of [Prime Minister] Ali Zidan," said Osama Kaabar, a leader of one of the militias that had promised to lift their siege if the law was passed. Kaabar is also vice president of the Supreme Council of Libyan Revolutionaries.

The gunmen had temporarily withdrawn from around the foreign and justice ministries on Sunday.

The new law bars any Kadhafi-era official from serving in government regardless of their role in the revolution. Both Prime Minister Zidan and GNC President Mohamed Magarief once served as diplomats under the Kadhafi regime before defecting.

"This law is far too vague - potentially barring anyone who ever worked for the authorities during the four decades of Kadhafi's rule," Human Rights Watch's Sarah Leah Whitson said in a statement on Saturday.

Prior to the congressional vote, demonstrators flooded Martyrs' Square to

push for the bill's passage. Some rally participants came from Fashloum carrying coffins, joining scores of other demonstrators from the political isolation co-ordinating committee along with Tripoli residents.

"Sunday is the day on which our dignity is restored," read one leaflet distributed at the rally "Direct voting exposes the former regime's loyalists and enhances the standing of honest people. We will isolate them to cleanse the key posts of the state of corrupters and replace them with people of honour and competency who have been removed for 44 years."

"With the isolation of regime's loyalists, Libya will be without former regime's loyalists or corruption," read another leaflet.

Belqis Ghogha, who works in the investment sector, said the law's passage was a victory for the revolution and for martyrs.

Ahmed al-Tabibi, an Islamist member of the GNC, also praised the law's passage, adding that there were "no exceptions for anyone who worked with Kadhafi".

He noted that a new commission would be created with 12 members who hold degrees in Sharia and law, and that its rulings would be passed by a majority plus one.

Protestors cheered the bill's passage, chanting "the martyrs' blood is not in vain" and "political isolation is our main demand".

GNC spokesman Omar Hamidan said at a press conference held directly after the law's passage that it was an historic moment. He added that immunity would be withdrawn from GNC members so the law could be applied against them and that the law would enter into force in a month.

"This law is not aimed at exclusion or incrimination," Hamidan said. "Not all those who were excluded under this law are criminals; rather there are many patriots who were excluded and removed under the law."

He said that the legislation did not discredit honest patriots, but would draw a separating line between the former

regime's ideas and the ideas Libyans aspire to in order to build the new Libya.

"The law doesn't aim at incrimination at all; rather, it is just taking precautions to create a suitable atmosphere for the building of a modern state," Hamidan said.

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a-wi/features/2013/05/06/feature-01

- **Egypt's tourism rates are close to the 2010 peak: Minister**

Tourism Minister Hisham Zaazou believes that the figures for the first quarter of 2013 show the sector is recovering

Egypt received roughly 2.86 million tourists during the first quarter of 2013, a 14.4 percent rise compared with the same period of last year, announced tourism minister Hisham Zaazou.

Zaazou added that tourist numbers during the period from January to March show that the sector is recovering, and is expected to reach 2010 levels, when an estimated 14.7 million tourists visited Egypt generating \$12.5 billion in revenue.

The number of Arab tourists visiting Egypt in the first three months of the current year rose by 7.5 percent compared to the first quarter of 2012, reaching 520,000.

The average length of tourist stays, however, grew to 37 million nights in the first quarter of 2013, compared with 29 million nights in the same period of last year.

According to official data, around 11.5 million tourists visited the country in 2012 and generated some \$10 billion in revenue

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/70835/Business/Economy/Egypt-tourism-rates-are-close-to-the-peak-Minist.aspx>

- **Close but not together: Egypt and Iran seek Syria political exit**

Cairo and Tehran are working on a peace deal for Syria ‘to the liking of Al-Assad,’ but this will not mean normalisation of relations between them

Regional and Western diplomats in Cairo have told Ahram Online that Cairo and Tehran are both working on a blueprint for a peace plan for Syria that could be “swallowed” by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

The plan that is being discussed is essentially inspired by the Geneva parameters that were drafted by Lakhdar Brahimi, former UN-Arab League envoy, which allow for a gradual transformation of power "under Al-Assad" and would not force Al-Assad to step down.

What brings Cairo, where resides the highest Sunni entity Al-Azhar, and Tehran, the capital of Middle Eastern Shiism, together is one basic fear: foreign military action against Syria.

Egyptian and Iranian diplomats are terse in their remarks, even off the record. However, both agree there is this “growing pressure in Washington to get [US President Barack] Obama to give the go ahead,” for limited but forceful military intervention to end the intransigence of the Al-Assad regime after two years of civil war with the opposition.

“There is a growing pressure on Obama. One could say that yes it somehow started in Israel, but there are other players in the region that could benefit from a quick end to the Al-Assad regime,” commented an Egyptian diplomat.

He added: “From our point of view, this is not something that we could agree to — no matter what disagreements we have with Al-Assad's regime. We are firmly opposed to any military intervention against Syria.”

According to this diplomat, this was not necessarily the case within the Egyptian regime a few months ago, but it has evolved to be so. “Now we all agree that it is only through a political deal that this Syria matter can be fixed,” he said.

Meanwhile, an Iranian diplomat shared only a few words: “Tehran will do everything it can to serve the interests of the Syrian people and of course a war is not in the interest of our dear Syrian brothers.”

The deal that is currently being discussed in Cairo, Terhan, Moscow — yet another Al-Assad ally — and of course Washington

involves a gradual halt to all forms of hostilities with the presence of an Arab-international monitoring mechanism, and eventually a call for early presidential elections.

“Al-Assad had wanted to leave only in 2014 when his term in office ends. We are not at all far from this date and if we take into consideration the steps required to start and solidify a ceasefire in Syria and then start a process for presidential elections, then we are practically talking early 2014,” suggested another Egyptian diplomat.

Meanwhile, Cairo-based Western diplomats said that the preparations for a possible "military move" or "military choice" against Al-Assad, “if he chooses to use weapons of mass destruction against his people,” are underway, albeit at a slow pace and with the consent of some of Syria's neighbours, especially Turkey and Jordan.

“We hope we are not going to get to that point, but this depends on his friends (Iran and Russia) to convince him that he cannot resist for long,” said a Cario-based European diplomat.

According to the Iranian diplomat, Al-Assad had already given up on an earlier plan to run for the 2014 presidential elections. “I don’t think he thinks he will run for another term in office,” the Iranian diplomat said.

On another front, Cairo and Tehran do not seem keen to use this opportunity of joint regional diplomacy to restore full diplomatic ties between them. This seems to be particularly so with Cairo, which has been previously open to ideas of working with Tehran and of counting on different forms of Iranian economic assistance in return for flexibility but not normalisation.

Concerned government sources in Cairo say that the coming months might witness a considerable step up in the volume of Iranian tourists to Egypt, especially to Egyptian Red Sea and Mediterranean resorts. Cairo is also potentially willing to work with Tehran on some multilateral matters as it has done before in relation to the declaration of the Middle East as a weapons of mass destruction free zone.

“Normalisation is going to happen, but it will take a bit of time to streamline a few

matters,” said an Egyptian government source.

Security seems to be the key issue for both Cairo and Tehran. Cairo is particularly concerned about what its officials qualify as “bad Iranian influence” on radical Muslim militant “pockets” in Sinai and Gaza.

“They are giving us a headache and they are annoying Hamas in Gaza,” according to a security source in Egypt.

Tehran, for its part, is not comfortable with the “unhelpful” pressure that Cairo is exerting over the Sunni leadership in Iraq to obstruct a possible deal between the Iran-allied ruling Shia government in Baghdad and Sunni communities — even under the umbrella of the Arab League.

Sources on both sides said that these issues were among many matters examined during a recent high-level presidential team visit to the Iranian capital.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/70698/Egypt/Politics-/Close-but->

[not-together-Egypt-and-Iran-see-Syria-
p.aspx](#)

- **Two More Soldiers Injured by Land Mines in Hunt for Terrorists**

Two members of the armed forces were injured in a land mine explosion this morning near the Algerian border.

This followed multiple injuries caused by land mine explosions last week near Chambi Mountain, where security forces are searching for a terrorist group.

The two officers were immediately brought by helicopter to the regional hospital of Kasserine for treatment after being severely wounded, Mahjoub Kaheri, a doctor from the region, told Tunisia Live.

One officer stepped on a land mine and lost his right leg, Kaheri said.

The second soldier suffered injuries to his eyes and his doctor has said he may lose his sight, Kaheri added.

Three other landmines exploded last week in the Chambi Mountain region, wounding national guardsmen and army officers.

The land mines are believed to be planted by terrorists who are hiding in the mountain's forests.

Updated (5/6/2013, 7:19 p.m.): Algeria has announced a state of emergency in case armed militants sneak in from Tunisia following the land mine explosions in Kasserine, according to Mosaïque FM. The radio station also reported that proper measures were taken to protect the border after information was leaked to Algerian security forces that several Libyan militants had entered Tunisia en route to Algeria.

In an interview with Mosaïque FM, Rached Ghannouchi, head of the Islamist ruling party, said his party supports the national guards and army. Referring to the armed groups, he said that killing Muslims is a sin and that Jihad should be waged in Palestine and not in Chambi Mountain.

[http://www.tunisia-
live.net/2013/05/06/two-more-soldiers-](http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/05/06/two-more-soldiers-)

[injured-by-land-mines-in-hunt-for-terrorists/](#)

- **Egypt announces cabinet reshuffle**

Changes include removal of two ministers involved in IMF loan talks, and increase of Muslim Brotherhood representation.



Egypt has announced a cabinet reshuffle that removes two ministers closely involved in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and increases the representation of President Mohamed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood in government.

Prime Minister Hisham Kandil announced the nine changes to his cabinet on Tuesday.

The opposition had been demanding the installation of a politically neutral cabinet

to oversee parliamentary elections later this year.

These included the appointment of Amr Darrag, a senior official in the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), as planning minister.

The outgoing minister, Ashraf al-Arabi, had played a central role in talks with the IMF over a \$4.8bn loan seen as crucial to easing a deep economic crisis. Egypt has yet to seal a deal with the IMF.

Fayyad Abdel Moneim, a specialist in Islamic economics, was appointed as finance minister, replacing Al-Mursi Al Sayed Hegazy, another expert on Islamic finance who was appointed in January, the last time Kandil reshuffled the cabinet.

Abdel Moneim received a doctorate from Al-Azhar University in Islamic economics in 1999.

Yehya Hamed, another Brotherhood member, was appointed investment minister. The new cabinet includes at least 10 politicians affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood or the FJP, compared to eight in the old one.

Ahmed Suleiman was named as justice minister, replacing Ahmed Mekky, who resigned last month in protest at efforts by Morsi's allies to make changes to the judiciary.

The ministers of interior, defence and foreign affairs were left unchanged.

The government has been widely criticised for failing to revive an economy that is in deep crisis because of more than two years of political turmoil.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/05/20135792232868559.html>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Lebanon potential arena for regional wars: Shatah**



BEIRUT: Lebanon could very likely become an arena for regional conflicts, warns a previous political aide to former Prime Minister Saad Hariri.

“Lebanon, against Lebanese wishes, is considered a potential platform for further wars in the region,” Mohammad Shatah said in comments Tuesday.

Shatah also suggested a hidden agreement between Syria and Israel on the rules of play.

“There is a sort of implicit understanding between the Syrian regime and Israel concerning the boundaries of the game between them; and the confrontation usually takes place in Lebanon,” he told the Voice of Lebanon radio station.

Shatah, a former finance minister, said that while the prospects declined for a “direct” confrontation between the Jewish state and Hezbollah along the Lebanese-Israeli border, the chances of war are still high.

Israeli warplanes hit targets in Syria last week, raising fears of a possible wider conflict in the region.

Syria said the Israeli raids struck a military and scientific research center near Damascus, inflicting casualties.

Western agencies, quoting Israeli sources, said the Jewish state carried out an air strike near Damascus before dawn Sunday, targeting Iranian missiles destined for Lebanon's Hezbollah.

The attacks raised further fears that Syria's war could spill over into neighboring countries, including Lebanon.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/May-07/216175-lebanon-potential-arena-for-regional-wars-shatah.ashx#axzz2SVPrtUSr>

- **Lebanon asks UN to censure Israel for violating its sovereignty**

Lebanon has asked the United Nations Security Council to condemn Israel for violating its sovereignty by air, sea, and land.



In a letter to the UN Security Council, Lebanon urged the 15-member body to "compel Israel to halt its violations of Lebanon's sovereignty by air, sea and land, and carry out all its obligations in accordance with Resolution 1701," Reuters reported on Monday.

UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brokered a ceasefire in the war of aggression Israel launched against Lebanon in 2006, calls on Israel to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"The Israeli Air Force continues to violate Lebanese airspace and in the previous days intensified its circuits above Lebanon. This constitutes a disgraceful violation of (Lebanon's) sovereignty," the letter said.

On Friday and Sunday, Israeli warplanes carried out two airstrikes on Syria. The Syrian government called the attacks a "flagrant violation of international law."

On Sunday, Lebanese President Michel Sleiman condemned the Israeli airstrikes on Syria. A statement issued by Lebanon's presidential office read: "Sleiman strongly condemned Israel's aggression on Syrian sites [which it carried out] by violating Lebanese airspace to carry out these attacks."

"This act is not unusual for a mutual enemy [such as Israel] whose policy is based on aggression that takes advantage of the circumstances Syria is going through to carry out its aggression just as it used to do in Lebanon during its days of crisis," the statement added.

Lebanese caretaker Prime Minister Najib Miqati also denounced the strikes, saying they "underscored once again Israel's aggressive intentions."

"[The strikes] fall within the series of continuous aerial violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and its threats against Lebanon," he said in a statement issued on Sunday.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry has sent letters to the UN Security Council stating

that Israel's aggression shows the links between Tel Aviv and terrorist groups operating in Syria, including the al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front.

Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoabi told reporters in Damascus on Sunday that Syria had the right and the duty to defend its people by all available means and it would not give in to Israeli acts of aggression.

The Israeli attacks on Syria have made the Middle East more dangerous, the Syrian information minister stated.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302198/lebanon-asks-un-to-censure-israel/>

- **MPs call for stiffer penalties to combat campus violence**



AMMAN — The Lower House on Sunday called for tougher penalties against those involved in campus violence, urging the government to review the higher education system in the country.

During a session on Sunday dedicated to discussing violence at universities across the country, the deputies provided the government with their suggestions and recommendations to curb the phenomenon.

They focused on the need to impose strict penalties to prevent any student from resorting to violence, calling for fair admission criteria and engaging students in extra curricular activities.

Last week, an armed fight between members of two tribes at Maan's Al Hussein Bin Talal University ended with four fatalities, including a 12-year-old who was visiting campus with a school trip, and 25 injuries among students.

During the session, Deputy Rula Hroub called for allowing political parties to organise activities at universities, arguing that such a measure will encourage

students to adopt dialogue instead of violence.

MP Mirza Bollad (Zarqa, 1st District) called for a code of conduct among deputies and senators to suspend their help to any students proven to be involved in acts of violence and to prevent their involvement in the affairs of universities.

Other deputies suggested that universities dedicate one compulsory hour to educate students on their rights and responsibilities.

They also stressed the need to monitor education at private universities, where they said students expect to pass all classes without making any effort.

Also during the session, Higher Education Minister Amin Mahmoud briefed the Lower House on the government's plans to deal with the phenomenon, focusing on recommendations of the Higher Education Council.

Mahmoud said he will also study the MPs' suggestions and incorporate them into the government's plan.

He agreed with most of their recommendations, including the need to stiffen penalties against students involved in acts of violence. Mahmoud also stressed the need to review current admission procedures and criteria.

The proposed plan also links students' behaviour at universities with their chances to find employment. Students labelled by their university as perpetrators of campus violence will be negatively affected in their chances to find a job, Mahmoud said.

He stressed the need to come up with specific descriptions and definitions of violence to single out those involved.

“The strategy to contain campus violence begins before higher education,” the minister noted, underscoring the role of schools and local community organisations in combating the phenomenon.

Within the proposed plan, the government seeks to enhance the role of deanships of student affairs and student unions to ensure their active involvement in matters related to the universities.

Mahmoud pointed out the need to develop curricula in a way that encourages students to busy themselves with research and work to enrich their skills and knowledge instead of only relying on being spoon fed information by their teachers.

The government will also seek to train security guards at universities to enable them to deal with any emergency on campus, he told deputies.

<http://jordantimes.com/mps-call-for-stiffer-penalties-to-combat-campus-violence>

6. SYRIA

• Syria decide how to respond to Zionist aggression

TEHRAN, May 7 (MNA) –Iran's Foreign Minister believes Syrian people and government will choose how to react to the Zionist regime aggression.

Ali Akbar Salehi said that “Syrian people and government will decide about this, based on their own national interest and Iran will not interfere with it.”

Upon arrival in Amman the Foreign Minister, Jordan, answered some of the reporters' questions.

In response to a question of the continued Israeli hostility against Syria and likely reaction from Iran, Salehi responded: "that Syria reacts is up to people and the Syrian government and it is not something you want to interfere or have any specific recommendations."

He added: "they will counsel with patience and accuracy, and they will take into account their national interests, and then decide on this matter."

Salehi added that some were trying to raise the Shia-Sunni issues and to turn it into sedition. He asked everyone to be vigilant, and said "we should all take responsibility to prevent spread of sedition."

Salehi also pointed to the exhumation and desecration of Hujr ibn Adi tomb and said: "it's approximately 1383 years since the great companion of the Prophet (PBUH) was buried in that place. And nearby communities were all Sunni, how is it that

during all these years, there were no questions, and all of sudden such incidents happens."

Iranian Foreign Minister stressed: "these issues show that they [Salafist Terrorists] are not benevolent to Muslim people, and are looking to spew hatred among the Muslim people, and draw attention to the terrorist groups in the region, and to divert their attention from West to East."

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1821369>

- **Iran urges probe into Israel's aggression against Syria**

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations has called for an investigation into the Tel Aviv regime's recent act of aggression against Syria, saying the latest Israeli airstrike was a direct violation of international law.



On May 5, Syria said the Israeli regime had carried out an airstrike targeting a research center in a suburb of Damascus, following heavy losses of al-Qaeda-affiliated groups inflicted by the Syrian army. According to Syrian media reports, Israeli rockets struck the Jamraya research center.

Mohammad Khazaei, the Iranian envoy to the UN, said in a letter to the UN secretary general and the president of the UN General Assembly on Monday that the recent aggression by Israel was provocative and unjustifiable and that the Tel Aviv regime must be held accountable for its unlawful acts.

The May 5 aggression was the Israeli regime's second strike on Syria in three days. The Jamraya facility had been targeted by another Israeli airstrike in January.

Khazaei also urged the international community, especially the UN and its affiliated organizations, to investigate Israel's criminal and irresponsible behavior.

The Iranian envoy said the move by the Israeli regime was a direct violation of international law.

Khazaei warned that the recent Israeli airstrikes would intensify tension and instability in the region.

On Monday, a senior Syrian official, whose name was not mentioned in the report, told Russia Today that the Israeli regime had used depleted uranium in its airstrike on Syria.

The countries hostile to the Syrian government and nation, including Turkey and several Arab states in the region, have adopted a policy of silence toward Tel Aviv's acts of aggression against Syria.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302242/iran-urges-probe-into-israels-syria-raid/>

- **Kerry to 'make another stab' at Syria deal with Russia**



(Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will "make another stab" at seeing if the United States and Russia can work together to find a political solution to end Syria's civil war when he visits Moscow this week, a senior U.S. official said on Monday.

Kerry departs for Moscow on Monday afternoon and is scheduled to see Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday to discuss a wide range of issues including the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, Afghanistan and U.S.-Russian trade.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, the U.S. official said he did not know if Washington and Moscow might be able to move forward on a political plan for Syria that they endorsed on June 30, 2012, but that has since gone nowhere.

That plan, agreed to in Geneva, was aimed at resolving through talks among all sides a civil war that has cost more than 70,000 lives, but it left open the question of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's exact fate.

Russia says his exit from power must not be a precondition for a dialogue among Syrians to end the conflict.

"We have their formal commitment with their agreement to the Geneva Communique of June 30th 2012 but now we need to go beyond formal commitments like that to figure out if there are ways to actually build off of it," said the U.S. official.

"It is no secret that so far we have not been able to do that but we certainly want to try to make another stab at it, to make another effort at it, because events on the ground have become steadily worse," he added.

"The casualty figures are mounting, the rate of killing has gone up and as the Israeli strikes show, the situation is adding to instability in the region," the official said.

U.S.-Russian ties have been strained by many issues over the last year, among them Syria, what the United States views as a Russian crackdown on Russian civil society and pro-democracy groups and a dispute over U.S. adoptions of Russian children.

Russia, backed by China, has refused to consider sanctions on Assad's government, vetoing three U.N. Security Council resolutions condemning his crackdown on opposition groups.

Russia, which maintains a naval base in Syria, supplies arms to Assad's government and but says it is not delivering weapons that could be used in the civil war. Moscow has vehemently opposed arming or supporting the rebels.

Kerry on Wednesday will travel to Rome where he will meet with Israeli Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, who has special responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the State Department said.

He will also meet Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh in Rome. The meetings are part of Kerry's effort to find

a way to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations, which fell apart in 2010 in a dispute over Israel's construction of Jewish settlements on West Bank land the Palestinians want for a state.

He will meet with Italian officials to discuss issues including Afghanistan, Syria and the Middle East, the State Department said.

ISRAELI RAIDS

Israel conducted two air raids on neighboring Syria over the weekend.

The attacks hit targets manned by Assad's elite troops in the Barada River valley and Qasioun Mountain, residents, activists and opposition military sources said. They included a compound linked to Syria's chemical weapons program, air defenses and Republican Guards' facilities, the sources said.

Russia said it was concerned the chances of foreign military intervention in Syria were growing, suggesting its worry stemmed in part from media reports about the alleged use of chemical weapons in the conflict.

The U.S. official played down comments by Carla Del Ponte, a member of a U.N. inquiry into war crimes and other human rights violations in Syria, that human rights investigators have gathered testimony from casualties of Syria's civil war and medical staff indicating that rebel forces have used the nerve agent sarin.

The Geneva-based inquiry is separate from an investigation of the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria instigated by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, which has since stalled.

"Our understanding has been that the armed opposition does not have such weapons and so we'll have to re-check our facts but our initial take on that was that they do not have such things in their arsenal," said the U.S. official, stressing that the United States takes all such reports seriously.

"We have no information to suggest that they have either the capability or the intent to deploy or use such weapons," he said of the rebel fighters.

Despite their disagreements with Moscow, U.S. officials say these have not kept them from cooperating on issues such as trying to contain the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs.

Among the issues that is likely to come up when Kerry is in Moscow is U.S.-Russian counterterrorism cooperation following the April 15 attack on the Boston Marathon that killed three people and wounded 264.

The two men suspected of carrying out the attack, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, are ethnic Chechens who emigrated to the United States are suspected of having detonated two bombs made with pressure-cookers in the attack.

What, if any, ties the two suspects had with foreign militants is a key question for investigators trying to determine how the pair became radicalized. How they selected their target would also shed light on their mindset.

A second U.S. official, also speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity, said Russian authorities had been helpful to

U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation probe into the attack.

"With respect to your broader question about trust and mistrust, that's a bigger historical question," he said. "We have learned that we don't always agree on all issues in our relationship with Russia.

"But that doesn't mean that if we're having a disagreement in one area, that that necessarily means that we can't cooperate on a different area," he added

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/06/us-syria-crisis-usa-idUSBRE9450HU20130506>

- **Turkey, Israel hold drills near Syrian border**

Turkey and Israel have launched separate military maneuvers near Syria, which has been battling foreign-sponsored terrorism for more than two years.



The 10-day Yildirim-2013 Mobilization Exercises began on Monday in the southern province of Adana near the Syrian border and would wrap up on May 15, according to a statement issued by the Turkish General Staff.

The Turkish military says the drills aim to test its preparedness for battle and coordination with government ministries at a time of mobilization and war.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops participated in military exercises in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, near the border with Syria, on Monday.

A former director of Israel's security service says the regime has to make full preparations for a possible war anytime. Israel has also deployed two Iron Dome missiles near the Lebanese border.

The Syria crisis began in March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of

soldiers and security personnel, have been killed in the violence.

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

In an interview recently broadcast on Turkish television, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said that if the militants take power in Syria, they could destabilize the entire Middle East region for decades.

"If the unrest in Syria leads to the partitioning of the country, or if the terrorist forces take control... the situation will inevitably spill over into neighboring countries and create a domino effect throughout the Middle East and beyond," he added.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/06/302191/turkey-israel-hold-drills-near-syria/>

- **Ban voices concern over Israel aggression against Syria**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed grave concern over the Israeli regime's recent aggression against Syria.



Ban "expresses grave concern over reports of air strikes in Syria by the Israeli Air Force," the UN secretary-general's spokesman Martin Nesirky said in a statement on Sunday.

"The secretary-general urges respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the region, and adherence to all relevant Security Council resolutions," Nesirky also said.

Ban also called on "all sides to exercise maximum calm and restraint, and to act with a sense of responsibility" in order to avoid an escalation of conflict in Syria.

On Sunday, Syria said Israel attacked the Jamraya Research Center, located northwest of Damascus. The center had

been targeted by another Israeli airstrike back in January.

The aggression came shortly after Tel Aviv confirmed on Friday that its warplanes had hit a target in Syria.

Meanwhile, a senior Syrian official told Russia Today that Israel used "a new type of weapon" during the airstrike.

"When the explosion happened, it felt like an earthquake. Then a giant golden mushroom of fire appeared. This tells us that Israel used depleted uranium shells," said the official, who asked not to be named.

The Syrian Foreign Ministry on Sunday called the attacks as "a declaration of war."

Syrian Information Minister Omran al-Zoabi told reporters in Damascus on Sunday that Syria had the right and the duty to defend its people by all available means and it would not give in to Israeli acts of aggression.

The unrest in Syria began in March 2011, and many people, including large numbers

of army and security personnel, have been killed in the violence.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/07/302228/ban-voices-concern-over-israel-aggression/>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• DM warns bachelors to move out of residential areas

The long arm of the law is still catching up with the bachelors in Dubai who live in residential areas.

The Dubai Municipality (DM) on Monday issued a warning to bachelors to move out of areas designated for families, indicating that it will intensify the clampdown on singletons living in residential areas.

As per the municipal rules in Dubai, singletons, either unmarried or married and living away from their families, should be living in the residential buildings in the Commercial Business District or residential areas designated for them, such as Hor Al Anz, Al Muteena, Al Quoz 4 and Al Qusais 1 among others. Labourers are allowed to

live only in labour accommodations in Sonapur, Al Quoz and Jebel Ali.

Fines ranging from Dh1,000 to Dh50, 000 could be imposed on landlords and tenants leasing out apartments in residential areas to bachelors, depending on the size of accommodation and the number of warnings issued.

Hundreds of Dubai residents have already been fined and several others have been served with eviction notices by the Buildings Department of the municipality. Those who did not relocate have faced disconnection of power and water supply as well.

Shajin Ratheendran from India, who lives in Al Nahda 2, said he was concerned about the municipality's warning. "I found (my) accommodation close to my office after a lot of hunting. It is not fair to ask a person to move out of his house just because he happens to be a bachelor. If the municipality is concerned about safety issues or nuisance caused by groups of young men, there should be other rules in place to prevent them."

Acting Director of the department Yusuf Abdullah Al Marzouqi said the municipality had been effectively executing the law of categorising areas in the emirate of Dubai in order to evict bachelors from residential areas, and prevent them from sharing family accommodation. This was to preserve the residential environment, social safety and tranquility, he said.

The civic body had cracked down in many areas after field visits in several residential areas in Dubai, as many bachelors were found staying in residential areas designated for families.

The department had already notified bachelors staying in residential areas allocated to families and given deadlines to tenants and owners to evacuate the places, and disconnected services.

Marzouqi, who said it had been noticed some owners were still leasing rooms for bachelors in areas allocated for families, urged the public to cooperate with the civic body.

"The municipality will take necessary action in case of receiving any complaint

from families regarding the presence of bachelors in these areas,” he said.

He also warned families who shared apartments that they were violating the rules and regulations which would adversely affect the social safety and harmony of the country, he said.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/inside.asp?section=infocus&xfile=/data/infocus/2013/May/infocus_May4.xml

- **EU pushes for universal bank account access**

The European Commission will set out on Wednesday plans for universal access to current accounts with banks — seeking to remedy an exclusion that Brussels calculates affects nearly 60 million adults across the European Union.

Legislative proposals on payment accounts also aim to make it easier to switch banks, similar to EU measures to open up utility markets in recent years.

And finally, according to proposals seen by AFP on Tuesday, they will insist on

transparent costs information for consumers.

Turning the proposals into law will require the approval of EU member governments and the European Parliament, and only after detailed industry submissions.

Payment, or current accounts, will, however, offer limited functionality — the ability to transfer money, but no credit-card and no overdrafts, as is frequently the case at present where banking restrictions are imposed on individuals with poor credit ratings.

“Banks will not be allowed to refuse to open a payment account guaranteeing the minimum essential payment services to a consumer with poor credit history or any other type of financial difficulty,” the Commission documents state.

Exceptions to these rights would be where individuals are found guilty of breaches of money-laundering or anti-terror legislation, or if a similar account already exists in the country concerned.

Consumers should be able to switch banks within 15 days if they chose one in the

same country, and within 30 days if they look across borders, as political leaders seek to create a true EU-wide banking union.

In some countries, the proportion of citizens without current accounts is especially high — the Commission estimates, for instance, that 25 million people in Bulgaria and Romania do not have payment accounts, meaning they operate largely on a cash or barter basis.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/international/2013/May/international_May209.xml§ion=international

- **Defendants in sedition case loyal and sincere: Witnesses**

At the latest hearing of what is known as the ‘trial of the clandestine organisation’, in which 94 people are accused of sedition, witnesses described defendants as loyal and sincere, with good morality. The State Security Circuit of the Supreme Federal Court held its 8th hearing in Abu Dhabi on Monday, and listened to several defence witnesses.

A 43-year-old Emirati man was the first to take the stand as a defence witness, when the first witness called did not appear.

Presiding Judge Falah Al Hajiri asked the man about his relationship to the defendants, with the witness revealing his wife’s sister was on trial.

He said he had been associated with them in his long-time work in education, and had not seen from them anything except good morals and enthusiasm for the country. He attended National Day celebrations with some of the defendants and testified he heard one repeatedly saying the Rulers of the Emirates were like angels.

The witness went on to say that the members of Al Islah Association were keen on the country.

Lawyer Mohammed Al Zaioudi asked the witness about his knowledge of Al Islah Association. In reply, the witness said he had attended a number of lectures the Association had held in Fujairah.

Lawyer Kassim Al Naqabi asked the witness whether he had interaction with the members after 2010, to which he replied he had.

The next witness, a 55-year-old Emirati, after taking the oath, said the defendants were innocent. In his statement he said the work they had been doing was charitable and humanitarian. He also described the defendants as “sincere” and “loyal”, and said he had not heard them affront this country — had they done so, he would have confronted them, he said.

He also added that he had worked with a group of them, and some were like his children and brothers.

Al Naqabi asked the witness whether he knows about the call of Al Islah, to which he answered the association had been established by a decree by the Ruler of the country in 1974.

A defendant — a well-known jurist in the country — then asked the witness if all the defendants were Sunni and Jamaa Muslims, and if they were allowed to disobey the Ruler.

The witness said all the defendants were Sunni and Jamaa but he emphasised it was not allowed, whatsoever, to protest or disobey the Ruler, who is worthy of respect and appreciation.

Later in proceedings some defendants had been handed over important documents from the prosecution, but they claimed some files were incomplete, while others said they had been exposed to violations in custody. One defendant requested more law books.

The court dismissed a hearing to be held today (Tuesday), to listen to the pleading of the public prosecution, and 12 defendants, whose names were registered.

However, it fixed May 13 and 14 to listen to defendant testimony, while May 12 and 20 were determined to hear the pleading of the defence lawyers.

The court ordered the directors of law enforcement agencies, under the supervision of the Public Prosecution, to hand over all the documents to be immediately delivered to the defendants, as per an earlier order.

The session was attended on Monday by 73 male defendants, 13 female defendants, 123 relatives of the defendants, 17 representatives of the media, five members of civil society organisations, including three from the Emirates Human Rights Association and two from the Jurists Association in the UAE. Also present in court were six defence lawyers, five members of the public prosecution department and the two defence witnesses.

http://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-article-display-1.asp?xfile=data/courtroundup/2013/May/courtroundup_May18.xml§ion=court-roundup

- **Bahraini court gives 31 anti-regime protesters long jail terms**

A court in Bahrain has sentenced 31 anti-regime protesters to 15 years behind bars after convicting them of attacking a police patrol in the village of Sitra.

The group was charged with attempted murder and setting a police car ablaze, in

addition to rioting and possessing petrol bombs, their lawyers, who requested anonymity, said on Sunday.

The defendants, however, have denied the charges and said they had been tortured into making confessions, AFP reported.

Bahrain has handed long jail terms to anti-regime protesters as part of its crackdown on protests since the beginning of demonstrations in the Persian Gulf country.

A military court in 2011 sentenced prominent human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and opposition leader Hassan Mushaima to life imprisonment for participating in demonstrations against the ruling Al Khalifa dynasty. A civilian court upheld the sentences in September 2012.

The Bahraini uprising began in February 2011. The Manama regime promptly launched a brutal crackdown on peaceful protests, calling in Saudi-led Arab forces from neighboring states.

Bahraini protesters say they will continue holding anti-regime demonstrations until their demand for the establishment of a democratically-elected government is met.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/05/05/301925/bahrain-hands-protesters-long-jail-terms/>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Afghan, Pakistani Troops Clash Again At Disputed Border

Afghan and Pakistani forces have again exchanged fire in a contested border region, with each side blaming the other for sparking the latest incident as tensions rise along a historically sensitive frontier.

Afghan officials said the May 6 clash took place in the Goshta district of eastern Nangarhar Province, along Pakistan's border.

They said the clash lasted for more than two hours.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry alleged to RFE/RL's Radio Mashaal that "the firing [first] came from the other side on Pakistan and our people returned fire."

Chaudhry added: "But the military-to-military contact has been established [now] and we are trying to resolve it."

Kabul blamed Pakistani forces for having "initiated attacks" on border posts.

"This morning around 8:20 a.m. the Pakistani forces in Goshta district, near the Goshta district in Jalalabad...initiated attacks of fire on our border police posts, and in reply the [Afghan] border police give a very rapid response," Afghan Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqi was quoted by Reuters as saying.

He added that a cease-fire had since been established.

On May 4, Afghan President Hamid Karzai accused Islamabad of stirring up trouble on his country's borders to pressure Kabul into formally accepting the Durand Line as the international border with Pakistan. Karzai said Afghanistan "has never

accepted" and "will never recognize" the Durand Line.

That disputed border was drawn up by the British in the 19th century.

The Interior Ministry spokesman on May 6 reiterated the Afghan side's determination to defend what Kabul regards as the country's border.

"There is tremendous support, public support, people are behind the Afghan national forces and [the support] is very high," Sediqi said. "The moral is very high and [the police] do their job in the right way and protecting the border is one of the sacred duties of the Afghan National Police Force."

The clash occurred in the same district as a bloody skirmish last week in which Afghan forces destroyed a border gate and checkpoint installed recently by Pakistan near the Durand Line.

One Afghan border policeman was killed in that clash.

Last week's fighting was widely condemned in Afghanistan and prompted protests in Kabul and Nangarhar.

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

- **Afghanistan summons Pakistani envoy over border firing incidence**

KABUL, May 6 (Xinhua) -- Afghanistan summoned on Monday the Pakistani Charge d'Affaires and lodged protest over "unprovoked attack" on its forces earlier in the day.

"Director-General of the First Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Azizuddin Ahmadzada, met with the Pakistani Charge d' Affaires in Kabul, Mr. Shah Nazar Afridi, this morning at the Foreign Ministry," the Afghan foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Mr. Ahmadzada lodged the Afghan government's strong protest with Mr. Afridi about the unprovoked attack by Pakistani forces, who used both heavy and light weapons, against Afghan forces near the Durand Line in Goshta district, Nangarhar province this morning," the statement said, adding the incident, which

took place at 8:20 a.m. local time, did not result in any casualties to Afghan forces.

On Wednesday, an Afghan border policeman was killed and three policemen wounded when a clash took place at the same area.

"Mr. Ahmadzada clarified to Mr. Afridi that in the case of Pakistani forces' continued refusal to remove all Pakistani installations in Goshta and other areas and any further unprovoked attacks by Pakistani forces, Pakistan will bear responsibility for any consequences," it said.

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

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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.*