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MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

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1. IRAQ

Iraq to Increase Production in 2014

Iraq will ramp up oil production to 4.5 million barrels per day by year-end in 2014, an increase of about 1.6 million that the country currently produces, an Iraqi senior official announced, reported the Associated Press.

Under the country's strategy to boost production, Iraq is bearing in mind three scenarios for increasing production, with the "medium scenario seeing the country reach 9 million barrels per day (bopd) by the end of 2020; or the high scenario of boosting production to 13 million bopd, with the low scenario reaching a peak of 6 million bopd," stated Chairman of the Prime Minister's Advisory Commission on Energy Thamer Ghadhban.

Ghadhban was discussing the country's plans at a ceremony in Baghdad, reported the Associated Press.

Around \$620 billion needs to be invested in its oil and gas and related industries through 2030, Iraq's Integrated National Energy Strategy reported. The report also forecasts that by 2022 all domestic energy requirements could be met, and that by diversifying the country's economy, an additional 10 million jobs could be added. "The strategic goals of the plan are to meet local energy needs, maximize government

revenues, encourage economic diversification and improve the standard of living and create jobs," said Ghadhban, Reuters reported. This strategy will be discussed at the formal Iraq Petroleum Conference, which is taking place next week. H.E. Dr. Rowsch N Shaways, Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq and H.E. Thamer Ghadhban, Chairman of the Advisory Commission to the Prime Minister, will meet to outline the goals and objectives of the strategy over the next 10 years.

Source:

http://www.pukmedia.com/EN/EN_Direje.aspx?Jimare=5439

Deteriorated security situation in Nineveh not to affect its local elections, says Janabi

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) MP Mudhir al-Janabi of the parliament Security & Defense Committee stressed that "The deteriorated security situation in Nineveh province will not affect conducting the local elections in the province."

Janabi told Iraqi News (IraqiNews.com) "The security crisis in Nineveh is not new, but it is there for years," noting "The elections day will be accompanied by widespread security deployment."

"The security forces should do their utmost to protect the lives of the citizens while they head to the electoral centers," he added.

Source: <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/deteriorated-security-situation-in-nineveh-not-to-affect-its-local-elections-says-janabi/>

Gharb calls to conduct Kirkuk local elections

Baghdad (IraqiNews.com) MP Abdullah Gharb of Kiekuk province, described the resolution of Kirkuk Provincial Council concerning building a trench around Kirkuk city controlled by Peshmerga forces as an attempt to isolate the city from the districts and sub-districts, calling to conduct fair local elections of this province.

Kirkuk PC has voted on 16th of past April on digging a security trench around the Kirkuk city to eliminate the armed attacks.

Gharb stated to Iraqi News (IraqiNews.com) "Unfortunately Kirkuk province did not witness any elections since 2005," noting "The elections were postponed due to the mass forgery in the voters register that was caused by the domination of certain side on the Independent High Electoral Commission's office in the province, so it is very important to conduct the province elections and form a commission to address the violations on the voters register."

"The topic of building trench around the city is rejected by the Arab component and we wish the province to reconsider this decision as it will isolate the city from the rest of the district and sub-districts associated to the province," he stressed.

Source: <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/gharb-calls-to-conduct-kirkuk-local-elections/>

politics/gharb-calls-to-conduct-kirkuk-local-elections/

Attacks, shuttling fighters and spreading sectarianism make Iraq new battlefield in Syrian war

Signs are growing that stretches of Iraq and Syria are morphing into a single battlefield for militants, exacerbating Iraq's slide into renewed deadly chaos a year and a half after U.S. troops pulled out.

Iraqi border posts along the Syrian frontier are coming under attack, and Syrian truck drivers have been singled out and shot inside Iraq. Syrian soldiers earlier this year sought refuge across the border, only to be massacred by al-Qaida.

Combat-hardened Iraqi fighters, meanwhile, are crisscrossing the frontier. Al-Qaida-linked Sunni militants are cooperating with hard-line Islamists among the Syrian rebels, while Iraqi Shiite fighters are joining militiamen from Lebanon's Hezbollah to fight alongside forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad's Iranian-backed regime. U.S. officials believe Iranian arms are still being shuttled to Damascus through Iraqi airspace.

"What is going on in Syria has a big, clear impact on us ... especially since there are attempts to move the battle to Iraq," said Ali al-Moussawi, spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

It's happening as the deadly drumbeat of violence is growing louder across Iraq. Nearly

2,000 lives have been violently snuffed out across the country since the start of April. The extent of the killing hasn't been this bad for half a decade, when Iraq's last tip toward civil war was easing and American troops were still here to help keep the peace. Attackers killed more than 60 people in a relentless wave of bombings on Monday. Another nine were slain Tuesday.

"The events in the past three or four months prove that the violence in Iraq and Syria are two sides of the same coin," said Haider Ayed, a 35-year-old math teacher and father of two in Baghdad's southwestern Bayaa neighborhood. "We are going through a very dangerous period."

It's a worrying trend for the United States, which is mulling whether to arm Syria's rebels even as it adapts to a new relationship with Iraq following a divisive war that claimed nearly 4,500 American and more than 100,000 Iraqi lives.

The spokesman for the American Embassy in Baghdad, Frank Finver, said the U.S. shares Iraqi government concerns about the level of violence in Syria, as well as about extremists who are trying to capitalize on the situation in Syria and incite violence inside Iraq.

The U.S., Finver added, is working with allies and moderate members of the Syrian opposition to isolate extremists and "ensure their violent and divisive ideology does not take root in Syria or spill over into Iraq." Iraq officially remains neutral in the Syrian conflict. Al-Maliki has repeatedly called for a peaceful, political solution to the crisis, though he has also warned that a victory for the rebels would unleash sectarian war in Iraq and Lebanon.

On Tuesday, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari insisted that Iraq has no official or military role in the civil war, and said Baghdad does not encourage the movement of any Iraqi fighters to Syria.

Still, the cross-border violence continues. An Iraqi border guard was killed and two others were wounded Sunday in clashes with fighters

the Interior Ministry said were members of the Free Syrian Army rebel group. Border guards thwarted two other attempts by gunmen and smugglers to sneak into Iraq from Syria, officials said.

The long and porous border runs along Iraq's Sunni-dominated provinces of Anbar and Ninevah, and was a key conduit for arms and al-Qaida fighters in the years following the 2003 U.S.-led invasion. Centuries-old cultural and tribal affiliations span the loosely defended desert frontier.

A Western diplomat in Baghdad described Iraq's control of the border with Syria as limited.

"With all the air power and surveillance the (U.S.-led) coalition had, it did not fully control that border," said the diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak publicly. "On the border area there is a nexus of smuggling and informal links and trade."

Sadoun al-Shaalan, a provincial councilman in Anbar province, said clashes along the border between Iraqi forces and gunmen from Syria are growing more frequent. He attributed the uptick to a rise in smugglers profiting from the war as well as insurgents shuttling fighters back and forth.

Iraqi army units deployed near urban centers within the province — where anti-government sentiment is strong — are often unwilling to confront insurgents deep in the desert because they lack sufficient aerial support and experience in the harsh, remote environment, he added.

"Most of the time, the gunmen and smugglers have better weapons and equipment than our units," he said.

Iraq's isolated western desert was the scene of the country's deadliest incident of spillover from the Syrian conflict — a March attack in which 51 Syrian soldiers were killed. The Syrian troops had retreated into Iraq after their border post was attacked by rebels, and were later ambushed, along with their Iraqi military escorts, in a highly organized assault

involving explosives, gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades unleashed by al-Qaida's Iraq arm.

The militant group, known as the Islamic State of Iraq, linked the mission directly to the conflict in Syria, saying it planned the raid following "the blessed operations carried out by our brothers in Syria."

The group has since attempted to frame its cause as part of a broader cross-border battle. Leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi went so far as to announce a merger in April with Syria's Jabhat al-Nusra, the most powerful rebel force fighting to topple Assad. Al-Nusra leader Abu Mohammad al-Golani quickly distanced himself from that takeover attempt.

Al-Qaida's central leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, has tried to end the squabbling. He released a statement this week ordering the two groups to remain separate and not to attack one another, while saying both of their leaders could keep their posts.

Syrians were also targeted in Iraq earlier this month when gunmen set up a fake checkpoint on a main highway linking Baghdad to Syria and Jordan. The gunmen killed three Syrian truck drivers and burned their rigs.

Al-Shaalan, the provincial council member, said the attackers managed to operate their checkpoint for a full hour and then got away with several hostages without any resistance from the Iraqi military.

Anthony Cordesman, a longtime observer of Iraq as an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, questions the lack of American attention on Iraq, particularly in light of Washington's efforts to isolate Iran, Syria's main patron.

"For all the current attention to Syria, Iraq is the larger and more important state," he wrote in a commentary this month. A slide toward civil war inside Iraq will push its majority Shiites closer to Iran and Syria, he predicted.

"If Assad survives and the Arab Gulf states continue to isolate Iraq, the largely token U.S. presence in Iraq is likely to become irrelevant

and Iraq is likely to become part of a Shiite axis going from Lebanon to Iran," Cordesman wrote. "If Assad falls ... Iran seems likely to do everything it can to replace its ties to Syria with influence in Iraq."

Source:

<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/06/11/attacks-shuttling-fighters-and-spreading-sectarianism-make-iraq-new-battlefield/>

● American embassy in Baghdad investigate drug charges and corruption cases in it

U.S. embassy in Baghdad announced on Thursday, that it is investigating drug charges and corruption in the headquarters of its embassy in the capital while stressed that "no one" will be safe from the investigation and imprisonment.

The U.S. Department of State, announced yesterday that the Diplomatic Security is accused of covering up issues of prostitution and drug trafficking involving staff in Baghdad, pointing to "a secret network" to smuggle drugs around the embassy in Baghdad that secure narcotic substances for staff contracted with the U.S. Department of State in the Diplomatic security field , the announcement came after it was revealed by CBS News of America

The spokeswoman of the U.S. Department of State , Jennifer Basaki said in a statement, briefed by "Shafaq News" that "She is investigating the issue and asserted that ambassadors were imprisoned in the past and

we are dealing seriously with the allegations noted by CBS “.

“The president never tolerate in any corruption issue made by any government employee, which means that he is ready to dismiss any diplomat if charges proved against him,” White House spokesman, Jay Carney said.

“CBS” U.S. TV had broadcasted, what he said as parts of a report wrote by the Inspector General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about “acts of corruption, drugs, sex and chaos in our embassies abroad”.

“elements in the Diplomatic Security Service in charge of protecting the former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, used prostitutes during official trips abroad,” adding that “a secret network of drug smuggling at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad sells drugs for employees in the Diplomatic Security Service, and to a U.S. ambassador suspected of cohabiting prostitutes in a public park”.

It is worth mentioning that the U.S. embassy in Baghdad is the largest in the world as and observers estimate that it is six times larger than in space occupied by the United Nations building in New York; while The New York Times estimated an area of the size of Vatican City State that cost more than 592 million dollars, it operates on a daily basis more than 1,000 employees at least.

Source:

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/politics/6376-america-embassy-in-baghdad-investigate-drug-charges-and-corruption-cases-in-it-.html>

Iraq: Obama agreed to extend Iraq’s money protection abroad for another year

The Iraqi Foreign Ministry said that it has received a reply from the United States to ensure the approval of President, Barack Obama

on the protection of Iraqi funds deposited in banks in America for another year

The United States' commitment to the protection of Iraq's money and its assets was verified in the strategic partnership agreement signed between Iraq and the United States in 2008

Washington extend each year the protection for one year at the request of Baghdad in anticipation of starting many lawsuits and claims after lifting the international protection on these funds

“The minister, Hoshiyar Zebari received a reply message during a meeting in Baghdad on Tuesday evening the adviser to the U.S. Department of State , Brett Magrec from his U.S. counterpart, John Kerry,” A statement by the Iraqi Foreign Ministry received by“Shafaaq News”.

According to the statement, it was mentioned in the letter that Obama agreed to extend the protection of funds and special Iraqi assets in the United States for one additional year

The minister Kerry confirmed in the letter that the president's decision to extend the protection for an additional year is “a symbol of our partnership in the strategic framework agreement framework “.

The annually procedure raises the speculation that the Iraqi government look like a person escape from creditors when approaching payment date to seek protection from a strong party able to provide it

Observers say that the continuation of this situation means dependence of Iraq's money and its assets by the control of another country

Central Bank of Iraq has justified restoring to the protection by saying that Iraq's money and its assets will be a target of lawsuits and claims, including fake compensation of billions of dollars

It is worth mentioning that Iraq still pays 5% of crude oil imports to Kuwait after the invasion of the former regime of Kuwait in 1990, followed by international sanctions and resolutions to compensate all those affected by this invasion

ource:

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/business/6373-iraq-obama-agreed-to-extend-iraqs-money-protection-abroad-for-another-year.html>

Commander of Brigade 16: I will appear before court if necessary

Commander of Brigade 16 in the Iraqi army, expressed his willing to appear before court and face rebellion charge against orders

, on a condition of the appearance of Dijla commander and commander of the ground forces before the courts on charges of genocide crimes on Anfal and Hawija crimes, while stressing that he will carry out the orders of the Ministry Peshmarga only.

Dijla operation commander , Abdul Amir al-Zaidi said on Wednesday that he will refer about 600 officers and Kurdish soldiers from Brigade 16 of the Fourth Division of the Iraqi army to the courts on charges of failure to implement the orders in the occurrence of Sulaiman Bek sub-district crisis in Salahuddin province.

It is worth mentioning that a thousand Kurdish elements belong to the Iraqi army and deployed in the disputed areas between Baghdad and Erbil rejected orders of the Ministry of Defense, which issued orders to them during protests in Tuz Khormatu and Sulaiman Bek cities.

The commander of Brigade 16 of the Iraqi army , Bakhtiar Muhammad Sidiq said in a press release published on "Khandan" Kurdish website , briefed by "Shafaq News" that " if Abdul Amir al-Zaidi and the commander of the ground force , Ali Ghaidan came before the courts then we will think as officers and ranks of Brigade 16 to appear before courts because of non-implementation of transferring orders issued against us".

"Brigade 16 will perform all its duties".

"The pressure that they practice of cut our salaries since two months ago, will not lead us to abandon our duties in facing terrorists in which we sacrificed many martyrs and wounded to protect citizens".

"It was supposed to compensate the martyrs and the wounded and give them their salaries, but they cut it off".

"Al-Zaidi and Ghaidan don't serve the country, but they are being stubborn and we say to them and to their subordinates that we will not carry out orders issued by them and we will abide by all orders of Ministry of Peshmarga," Sidiq added.

It seems that the soldiers are willing to merge with Peshmerga forces, but officials in the region did not take a position in the possibility of accepting them as a part of the protection force of the region.

Peshmerga forces, which receive its orders from KRG, protect the region in addition to its presence in the disputed areas with Baghdad government

This move is considered as a painful strike to the cohesion of the Iraqi army, and may hinder efforts to establish security in the country, especially as it came after months of anti-government protests and escalation

of violence that has raised fears of the revival of sectarian conflict again.

Source:

<http://www.shafaaq.com/en/politics/6374-commander-of-brigade-16-i-will-appear-before-court-if-necessary-.html>

Iraqi -Jordanian oil line passes through unstable areas

A report prepared by Oxford Group said on Thursday that the Iraqi -oil Iraqi -Jordanian oil pipeline will be at risk, despite resorting to shorten the distance as much as possible and avoid the unstable security areas.

“A part of the line will pass within unstable Anbar province amid fears of extending any signs of violence in Syria to Iraq,” The report published in Jordanian Al-Ghad newspaper, briefed by “Shafaq News”.

“The pipeline will help to minimize the effects of the imported energy and transferring it to Jordan, along with the government's efforts towards the promotion of its energy resources, most notably the extraction of oil and selecting the technology of the first nuclear power plant during the current year

The report pointed out that “80% of Iraq's oil exports equivalent to 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd) are currently taking place through Strait of Hormuz, at the time Jordan depends on oil imports from the Gulf along with its imports of natural gas from Egypt to generate electricity, making both

Jordan and Iraq vulnerable to the political volatility of each access to its energy needs

Thus, this agreement on this project was one of the most important steps expected to avoid risks

The length of the pipeline, according to the signed agreement between the two parties to implement the project is about 1680 kilometers, the cost of extending the Iraqi oil pipeline between Basra and Jordan is about 18 billion \$.

Jordan will receive through this pipeline which is expected to be direct in current year, daily returns to about 3 billion dollars a year and will provide Jordan with its needs of crude oil to petroleum refinery in Zarqa, by up to 120-150 thousand bpd, with great potential to create a major new refinery in Aqaba with the participation of one of the world's independent foreign investment companies.

The agreement also included supplying Jordan Petroleum Refinery in Zarqa for about (150 thousand barrels / day) of crude oil through extending a branch of the pipeline for this purpose, to cover the need for the production of oil derivatives

Source:

http://www.shafaaq.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6375:report-iraqi-jordanian-oil-line-passes-through-unstable-areas-&catid=48:business&Itemid=73

Out of Iraq from Chapter VII will open a new page in its relations with the countries of the world

Baghdad (news) .. confirmed legal expert Ahmed Abbadi said that Iraq would emerge from Chapter VII of Article 39 up to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations after the implementation of all UN Security Council resolutions.

Ebadi said in a statement received by the Agency (news) copy of it: that Iraq would emerge from Chapter VII of Article 39 up to Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations after the implementation of all UN Security Council resolutions related to invade Kuwait will open a new page in its relations with the countries of the world and encourages foreign capital funds to invest in Iraq, like all other member states in the international community that Iraq has become state committed to international peace and security other than the image of Iraq at the time of the former regime,

Abadi added: that the transfer of the relevant files from Chapter VII to Chapter VI means that the deal would be bilaterally and the United Nations Mission to help Iraq, UNAMI will be the body responsible for the follow-up file of prisoners and Kuwaiti property and not the UN Security Council.

He pointed out that Iraq would emerge from tightening Chapter VII as the curtain on the stage of the lives of Iraqis bitter lasted about twenty-three years difficult. This and said Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah during his visit to Iraq yesterday that representatives of Iraq and Kuwait will meet today UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to ask the agreement that took place between Iraq and Kuwait on resolution 833 and the transfer of the file from Chapter VII to Chapter VI.

Source: <http://www.oneiraqidinar.com/out-of-iraq-from-chapter-vii-will-open-a-new-page-in-its-relations-with-the-countries-of-the-world/>

Iraq to join the membership of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment

The Iraq's accession to organizations and financial blocs and economic of the key things that are in favor of the country's economy, and in this regard confirmed economic affairs the importance of Iraq's accession to financial institutions and banking regulations Arab and regional because of its effect on the consolidation of economic relations between him and the member states, in time the same to the importance of the study of accession and portability relevant sectors to develop and update their capabilities and keep pace with global progress.

The Central Bank of Iraq announced earlier for the government's approval on Iraq's accession to membership of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit, returned that the decision will contribute to the increase in Iraqi exports and the inflow of foreign investments.

He said in a statement that the government had agreed to join the membership of the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (PE), "adding that" the institution has agreed to accept Iraq is a member. He added that this decision would contribute to increased Iraqi exports and the inflow of foreign investments to it, as well as the protection of investments Iraqi in the Member States of the institution. On the other hand said economic Mona earthquake: that the issue of joining any gathering or conglomerate financial and banking Arabic or regional must begin the readiness of evolution includes a series of reforms to work contexts that may hinder the process of investment and the most important reform of the banking system.

Indicated in a statement (morning): that any accession must be considered carefully because the study that will develop capabilities sectors of the economy, the most important private banks. stressed earthquake that he should to evolve our sectors of economic because it represents the entrance real investment and start to enter the Iraqi market, to need to be serious and the desire to exist., and expressed the hope that such hookups formality and protocol because it is in this case the Iraqi economy in something while the implementation of the preparations for



accession would raise the efficiency of the country's economy through the exchange of experiences and the consolidation of economic and trade relations between Iraq and the rest of the countries in these blocs or groups.

For her part, economic expert peace Sumaisem that Iraq's accession to financial organizations and regional economic would support the financial and banking sector.

She explained the (morning) that Iraq needs to keep pace with global developments in the field of banking and money transmission speed between him and the countries of the world, through agreements with Arab economic organizations. She added that the world looks to Iraq as a market investment promising but need to develop the banking sector to facilitate the movement of money in and out of the country.

Mentioned that the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit was established in August 1994 and its membership includes 39 Islamic countries, except Iraq, aimed at expansion of the business transactions and encourage the flow of investments between the Member States in accordance with Islamic law.

Source: <http://www.oneiraqidinar.com/iraq-to-join-the-membership-of-the-islamic-corporation-for-the-insurance-of-investment/>

2. IRAN

Ahmadinejad: Iranian Nation Able to Bypass Sanctions

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad downplayed the effectiveness of western sanctions against the country, and underlined that the Iranian nation will bypass the embargos and problems.



Ahmadinejad on Wednesday gave an upbeat prospect about progressive trend of Iran on the eve of presidential election.

Addressing a group of people on the sidelines of his visit to North Khorassan Province, he said that he was optimistic about prosperity of the nation and that Iran is capable enough to deal a blow to anybody hurling obstacle on the way of the nation.

Referring to the western governments which orchestrated systematic sanctions on Iranian nation and government, Ahmadinejad said that they might impede the strong waves of progress for a moment, but, the Iranian nation will bypass and eliminate the obstacles gradually.

Washington and its western allies accuse Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, while they have never presented any corroborative evidence to substantiate their allegations. Iran denies the charges and insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Tehran stresses that the country has always pursued a civilian path to provide power to the growing number of Iranian population, whose fossil fuel would eventually run dry.

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium

enrichment, Tehran is now under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions and the western embargos for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed West's demands as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

Tehran has repeatedly said that it considers its nuclear case closed as it has come clean of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s questions and suspicions about its past nuclear activities.

Source:

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203182046>

Iranian Deputy FM: No Military Solution Envisaged for Syria

"The issue of Syria has no military solution and Iran and Russia have consensus on that," Deputy Foreign Minister for the North Africa and the Middle East Affairs Hossein Amir Abdollahian told the Islamic republic news agency after a meeting with his Russian counterpart in Moscow on Wednesday.

The Iranian official arrived in Moscow on Tuesday to discuss issues of mutual interest, including the crisis in Syria, with Russian officials.

He said that during the meeting the two had detailed discussions on the situation in Syria and on ways to put an end to the ongoing violence in that country.

As for the Geneva II Conference on Syrian which is to be held in the Switzerland in July, Amir Abdollahian said Tehran would welcome holding of the conference.

"The conference will be successful only when all influential parties participate in the event," said the official.

He stressed that no other countries, not even Russia, Iran, US or Saudi Arabia, could decide on behalf of the Syrian people.

The Syrian nation should decide its own destiny by itself, Amir Abdollahian stressed.

He expressed hope that the Geneva II Conference would help Syrians determine their own destiny.

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

The US and its western and regional allies have long sought to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his ruling system. Media reports said that the Syrian rebels and terrorist groups have received significantly more and better weapons, a crime paid for by the Persian Gulf Arab states and coordinated by the United States.

The US daily, Washington Post, reported in May 2012 that the Syrian rebels and terrorist groups battling Assad's government have received significantly more and better weapons in recent weeks, a crime paid for by the Persian Gulf Arab states and coordinated by the United States.

The newspaper, quoting opposition activists and US and foreign officials, reported that Obama administration officials emphasized the administration has expanded contacts with opposition military forces to provide the Persian Gulf nations with assessments of rebel credibility and command-and-control infrastructure.

Opposition activists who several months ago said the rebels were running out of ammunition said last May that the flow of weapons - most bought on the black market in neighboring countries or from elements of the Syrian military in the past - has significantly increased after a decision by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Persian Gulf states to provide millions of dollars in funding each month.

Source:
<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203182026>

Iran Grand Ayatollahs urge high turnout in presidential election

Iranian Grand Ayatollahs have called for a massive voter turnout in the June 14 election to choose the country's 11th president.

In separate statements released on Thursday, Senior Iranian clerics, including Grand Ayatollahs Hossein Nouri-Hamedani, Nasser Makarem-Shirazi and Mohammad-Ali Alavi-Gorgani called for massive participation of voters in the presidential poll.

Ayatollah Nouri-Hamedani called on Iranians to go to the polls and said taking part in elections is "a religious and rational duty." He said a high voter turnout will further disappoint the enemies and demonstrate the "power, unity and will" of the Iranian nation.

He also called on the Iranians to vote for the most qualified candidate, who is pious and revolutionary, would safeguard Islamic values and meet the basic needs of people.

Ayatollah Makarem-Shirazi also said that going to the polls was a "religious, divine and social duty," calling on all eligible voters to go to the polls.

Ayatollah Alavi-Gorgani also urged a high turnout in the election, urging voters to choose a person who believes in religious principles and the Islamic establishment.

He said the presence of people would once again disappoint the enemies who seek to create voter apathy in the election.

Six candidates, namely President of the Expediency Council's Center for Strategic Research Hassan Rohani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili, Secretary of the Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaei, Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, and former Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Gharazi are running in Friday's presidential election.

The president of Iran is elected for a four-year term in a national election. Nearly 50.5 million Iranians are eligible to vote in Friday's election.

Source:

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/13/308786/iran-top-clerics-urge-high-voter-turnout/>

Opinion polls predict runoff for Iran's June 14 election

As Iran's presidential candidates wrap up their final day of campaigning across the country, the latest opinion polls indicate that the mid-June presidential election in Iran will go to a runoff.

If no candidate garners 50 percent of the ballots cast in the first round, a runoff vote will be held on June 21.

In the second round, the candidate with the most votes will be the winner and will take office if approved by the Guardian Council -- a process that takes between seven and ten days.

On Wednesday, the candidates continued their election campaigns, which were marked by extensive political advertising and high-profile rallies across the country as well as passionate pleas and promises.

The six candidates in Iran's presidential election are the President of the Expediency Council's Center for Strategic Research Hassan Rohani, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Saeed Jalili, Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaei, Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, former Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, and former Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Gharazi.

Former Majlis Speaker Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel and former First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref withdrew their candidacy bids respectively on Monday and early Tuesday.

The president of Iran is elected for a four-year term in a national election.

Iranians will go to the polls in the nation's 11th presidential election on June 14. Over 66,000 polling stations will be set up across the country, while expatriates will also be able to cast ballots at 285 polling stations that will be set up in their respective countries.

Nearly 50.5 million Iranians are eligible to vote in the upcoming election. The fourth city and rural council elections are also scheduled to be held on the same day.

Source:

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/13/308692/iran-election-will-go-to-runoff-poll/>

High voter turnout will deter enemies' threats: Iran Foreign Ministry

Iran's Foreign Ministry has called on Iranians to participate massively in the June 14 presidential election, saying a high voter turnout will play a deterrent role against threats by enemies.

The Foreign Ministry announced in a statement on Wednesday that the realization of the political epic as emphasized by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei will lead to solidarity, national unity, dignity, honor and power for Iran on the regional and international stage.

"The election on Friday, June 14, 2013, can turn into a memorable event in Islamic Iran's history and [can be] an indication of national might against enemies and can boost the country's deterrent power against the sanctions [imposed] and threats [posed] by hegemonic powers," the statement read.

A high turnout in the election will show that religious democracy is institutionalized in the county and people have an effective role in determining their own fate, the statement added.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry said the necessary arrangements have been made with Iranian missions abroad to hold the presidential vote, urging Iranian nationals overseas to turn out in droves on election day.

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Source:

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/13/308785/foreign-ministry-urges-high-voter-turnout/>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

Senior Israeli minister: Palestinians will be governed by Jordan

Israel's deputy defense minister on Thursday said there will never be a Palestinian state and that Palestinians will be governed by Jordan.

"The Jewish people are not settlers in the West Bank but Israel will make the Palestinians settlers and Jordan will be the one taking control over Palestinians and that's it," Danny Danon told Israel's Channel 1.

Asked about the upcoming visit of US Secretary of State John Kerry, who is trying to restart negotiations for a two-state solution, the Knesset member said there would never be a Palestinian state, whether Kerry visited or not.

Israel will control the empty land in the West Bank and turn Palestinian population centers into Jewish settlements, Danon said.

He added that the Israeli government and the Knesset shared his opinions, even if they did not admit it publicly.

Ahmad Tibi, a Palestinian member of the Knesset, was asked to respond to Danon's remarks.

Tibi told Channel 1 that Danon was the most honest extremist in Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu's government as he did not hide Israel's plans.

Meanwhile, MK Ofer Shelah warned that Israel was becoming like South Africa under apartheid. He said settlements in the West Bank were an obstacle to peace, and that "the occupation corrupts Israeli society."

Source:
<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=604574>

Israelis Demolish Palestinian Property near Jenin

Israeli forces Wednesday demolished two Palestinian homes, a barn and a shed in Barta'a, a village behind the segregation wall southwest of Jenin, according to the owner of the homes.

Ahmad Qabha told Wafa that a large military force raided the town, surrounded it from all sides before declaring it a closed military zone and demolished the barn, the shed and the 170-square-meters homes, which housed seven people.

He said that the soldiers threw some furniture out before demolishing them but prevented the owner from removing the rest of the furniture.

The army had demolished 11 shops in the area last month under the pretext of being built without permit. Residents also said they had received demolition orders for eight more shops.

Source:

<http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=22605>

PA objects to Israel's Western Wall construction plans

PA religious affairs minister says moving entrance to Temple Mount for egalitarian section may "push all of us to new conflicts and problems," stresses any changes to status quo must wait for agreement between Israel, PA.

The Palestinian Authority will not permit Israel to change the entrance to the Temple Mount in order to facilitate the building of an egalitarian prayer area near the Western Wall, PA Religious Affairs Minister Mahmoud El Habash told *The Jerusalem Post* in Ramallah Thursday morning.

Sharansky's plan will allow for the construction of an additional section of the Western Wall Plaza at the southern end of the Kotel, equal in size and height as the northern prayer area, for

egalitarian prayer and accessible as part of one unified Western Wall complex with a single entrance. Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has told Sharansky to meet with National Security Adviser Yaakov Amidror to deal with issues like how to handle moving the Mugrabi Bridge to the Temple Mount.

"Any changes in Haram a-Sharif [Temple Mount] is unacceptable to the Palestinians and Arab side," Habash said in a meeting with Israeli journalists. "It's a change of our heritage site and I believe such changes may push all of us to new conflicts and problems."

Habash, who is a former Hamas member from the Gaza Strip but strongly backs two states for two peoples, said any change in the status quo regarding the Temple Mount must wait until a final status agreement between Israel and the PA.

"Any changes in this situation will make the problem more difficult," Habash said. "We don't agree to any changes. It's a Wakf place, and Islamic place and we have documents to prove it. You can pray how you want after the liberation of Palestine."

Habash said he would agree with Netanyahu that there should be peace talks without preconditions, but only if the prime minister gave guarantees that the talks would not fail like past negotiations. He said he is trying to persuade his people to support a two-state solution but he is concerned that Netanyahu will not be willing to translate his support for a Palestinian state into actions.

"If you believe in two states, where do you imagine it - on the moon?" he asked rhetorically.

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

Egypt bourse suffers worst decline since November, losing LE13.1 billion

he Cairo index lost 5.2 percent to 4,598 points, its largest one-day decline since November 2012. It broke below major technical support at the November low of 4,683. There is now no strong support above the 2012 low of 4,027.

Sentiment was already weak because of the approach of June 30, the one-year anniversary of President Mohamed Morsy's administration. The opposition plans massive demonstrations to mark the date, raising fears of violence.

"It's a complete meltdown for the market - all the negative news is hitting the market," said Mohamed Radwan, director of international sales at Pharos Securities.

"People just had enough of it and sellers on a daily basis prove that they are making the right decision."

Source:
<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/egypt-bourse-suffers-worst-decline-november-losing-le131-billion>

Former PM granted retrial over corruption charges

Egypt's Court of Cassation has granted long-time Mubarak-era Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif a retrial over charges of illicit gains.

Nazif served as prime minister under former President Hosni Mubarak from 2004 to 2011, resigned during the 25 January popular uprising against the regime.

The Cairo Criminal Court in September last year sentenced Nazif to 3 years in prison and fined him LE9 million on corruption charges.

The Illicit Gains Authority had referred the former premier to court based on allegations he had illegally obtained gifts from press organizations and that he breezed his wife and sons into government posts.

Nazif, who served under ousted President Hosni Mubarak, was also accused of abusing power to amass LE64 million in assets that included property, shares in telecommunication firms and high-end automobiles.

The ex-PM's defence lawyers pleaded not guilty in last year's session, calling for Nazif to be acquitted.

The defense cited Article 166 of Egypt's constitution, stating that a prime minister or any other minister cannot be charged with wrongdoing without approval from the president, the public prosecutor, and two-thirds of parliament representatives.

Lawyers argued that the charges against Nazif had been filed by the Justice Ministry's Illicit

Gains Authority before the approval of the current constitution.

A number of former officials from Mubarak's regime have been granted retrials over corruption charges and, in some cases, had charges dropped after repaying illegally gained fortunes.

Source:

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/former-pm-granted-retrial-over-corruption-charges>

Algeria secures border with Tunisia, trapping terrorists

Algeria confirmed co-ordination with Tunisia to confront security threats on the shared frontier.

"The borders with Tunisia and Libya are well secured, thanks to co-ordination with the two countries' governments," Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci told Radio Algerie Internationale on Monday (June 10th).

He added that it was Algeria's duty to support neighbouring countries, as in the past. He urged Tunisia and Libya to unite to cleanse the area from terrorists and militants who fled northern Mali in search of safe havens.

"Algeria has supported Tunisia, Libya, Mali and Niger, and is still providing economic, military and security support to these countries to help them establish security and stability in the region," Algeria's top diplomat noted.

The foreign minister's call for enhancing security co-operation coincided with decisions made by the Algerian army command to create 20 closed military zones in the 4th and 5th military districts along the Tunisian border where civilians would only be allowed under a permit from the military commander in the province.

According to El Khabar, the decision was made after the same security plan on the Libyan and Malian borders succeeded in reducing infiltrations and smuggling. The measure was taken in co-operation with Tunisian authorities, with the two sides deciding to form a high security and military committee to co-ordinate efforts.

The newspaper said that the army command began implementing a new security plan three weeks ago with the Tunisian army. That plan included identifying more than 80 border points suspected of being used for infiltration and smuggling along the 965km-long land border between Algeria and Tunisia.

Security authorities specified 20 border points, all in the southern sector of the land frontier, as being the most important transit sites for terrorist groups engaged in smuggling weapons.

Those crossings included Shtita in the Great Eastern Sand Sea and Chott Djerid in El-Oued province, up to Al-Uwaynat, Oued Shabro, north of Tébessa province, through the mountains next to Jebel Chaambi.

The security agreements between Algeria and Tunisia included forming a military-security liaison and co-ordination committee to share security information on an immediate basis. This is in addition to the two sides benefiting

from intelligence from the results of investigations conducted into jihadists and weapons smuggling networks, and Tunisia benefiting from information obtained by Algerian aerial reconnaissance assets on the border strip.

In the meantime, Interior Minister Dahou Ould Kabila has stated that there was security co-ordination and exchange of information between Algeria and Tunisia, which is now confronting al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)-linked militants near the Algerian border.

In response to a question in the People's National Assembly on unrest in Tunisia, Ould Kabila said that there was information sharing "but Algeria doesn't intervene in Tunisian affairs".

"The terrorist group that is now active on Tunisian soil near the Algerian border entered through Mali," Ould Kabila added. He noted that Algeria was "following what's taking place there" and that "it has enhanced security on its eastern border, and beefed up surveillance of all suspicious movements in the area. Our mission is to secure our border".

Source:

http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/12/feature-02

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

Bassil promises 16 hours of electricity this summer

BEIRUT: Caretaker Energy and Water Minister Gebran Bassil promised Wednesday to supply Lebanon with 16 hours of electricity a day during the summer season despite the mounting consumption. Speaking at a news conference, Bassil said with the arrival of the Turkish electricity barge, the total power output would reach between 1,700 MW to 1,900 MW.

“This means that electricity production will rise by 50 percent and supply will reach 16 hours a day during the summer season,” Bassil said.

He noted that last summer Lebanon had received 10 to 12 hours of electricity a day.

“Next autumn and summer 2014 electricity supply to all of Lebanon will reach between 20 to 22 hours and in 2015 the country will enjoy 24 hours of electricity a day. This is the first time we have reached this capacity for a very long time,” Bassil claimed.

But some experts doubt Bassil’s claims based on previous experiences. They say the million Syrian refugees who will surely consume more power will make it very difficult to supply 16 hours a day during the summer season.

Bassil said that the second Turkish electricity barge had been scheduled to arrive in Lebanon on June 12, and adding that EDL had sent messages to the company inquiring about the delay.

Source:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2013/Jun-13/220178-bassil-promises-16-hours-of-electricity-this-summer.ashx#axzz2W62kTGK1>

Business leaders warn of economic collapse over political impasse

Leading business leaders warned Tuesday of total economic and financial collapse in Lebanon if the tense political and security situation did not come to a quick end.

Citing alarming economic figures, the speakers at a BIEL meeting called on politicians to set aside their differences and stop tampering with the livelihoods of the Lebanese and the country.

“We came here to tell the political forces stop squandering the basic elements of the Lebanese economy and stop forcing the young generations, tourists and investors to leave the country,” former Economy and Trade Minister and leading businessman Adnan Kassar told hundreds of businessmen, merchants, bankers and investors.

The private sector, which employs more than 600,000 people, have expressed outrage over the politicians’ inability to end their differences and also denounced the involvement of some Lebanese parties in the Syrian war.

Many investment banks and rating agencies have expressed deep alarm at the political and

economic deterioration in Lebanon and cautioned that the country could see its GDP fall below 2 percent in 2013 if the spillover from the Syrian conflict did not come to an end.

Citigroup indicated in a report that the real economy continued to be significantly affected by the prevailing political uncertainties, as trade and investments have underperformed.

It noted that activity in the construction and housing sector has stagnated, while tourism activity has receded.

But it said the banking sector, which underpins sovereign debt sustainability, remains robust, with non-resident deposits and private sector credit growing in double digits, and dollarization and risk premia remaining stable. It added that Lebanon's attempts to develop its potentially substantial offshore oil and gas resources had been dealt a blow by the current political impasse, and expected the oil and gas tender process to be put on hold.

Kassar stressed that the recent warning issued by the Gulf Cooperation Council about the deteriorating conditions in Lebanon was a strong message to all the Lebanese politicians.

He added that the Lebanese economy would suffer further if Arab tourists heeded the advice of their governments to avoid Lebanon for security reasons.

Charles Arbid, head of the Lebanese Franchise, said consumer confidence fell by 36 percent, the number of tourists dropped by 17.5 percent and foreign investments plunged by 68.6 percent in recent months.

Beirut Chambers of Commerce President Mohammad Choucair said all the

appeals made by businessmen and merchants in the past have fallen on deaf ears.

"We have entered the taboo area and all the diplomatic appeals are no longer useful. We are not talking about economic slowdown or a drop in GDP growth. We are now talking about total economic collapse. We are talking about a recession and stagnation," Choucair said.

He added that the pressure and escalation should be centered on the political class which only shows concern if its interests are under threat.

"I call on all sides to denounce sectarianism and confessionalism and rally behind one demand: protecting the livelihoods of the Lebanese," Choucair said.

Other speakers did not dismiss the possibility that many Lebanese investors and merchants might take their businesses to more stable countries. They said economic pressures had compelled investors to consider exiting the Lebanese market permanently.

Head of the Association of Banks in Lebanon Joseph Torbey called on the Lebanese not get involved in the conflicts in the region.

"Anyone who thinks a small country like Lebanon could benefit if it is directly involved in the conflicts in the region is naive," Torbey said. He called on the president of the republic to invite all parties in the country and persuade them to refrain from any involvement in the conflicts outside Lebanon.

Source:

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2013/Jun-12/220124-business-leaders-warn-of-economic-collapse-over-political-impasse.ashx#axzz2W62kTGK1>

6. SYRIA

Syria death toll reaches 93,000: UN

A report, which came amid US debate over whether to arm anti-Assad rebels, found 92,901 documented killings in Syria between March 2011 and the end of April 2013. However the UN's top human rights official, Navi Pillay, said that it was impossible to put an exact figure on the death toll from Syria's upward spiral of violence.

"The constant flow of killings continues at shockingly high levels, with more than 5,000 killings documented every month since last July," said Ms Pillay, the UN high commissioner for human rights. "This is most likely a minimum casualty figure."

"There are also well-documented cases of individual children being tortured and executed, and entire families including babies being massacred - which, along with this devastatingly high death toll, is a terrible reminder of just how vicious this conflict has become," she added.

The report came just as Bill Clinton appeared to split with President Barack Obama on the issue of US involvement in Syria, suggesting it was time to act more decisively to aid anti-Assad rebels.

In a question-and-answer session with Republican Senator John McCain reported

by Politico, the former US President said he thought it was an error to stand back from the conflict.

"Some people say, 'Okay, see what a big mess it is? Stay out! I think that's a big mistake", Mr Clinton said during an event for the McCain Institute for International Leadership in Manhattan.

"Sometimes it's just best to get caught trying, as long as you don't overcommit — like, as long as you don't make an improvident commitment," he added.

Mr Clinton had largely refrained from commenting on foreign policy while wife Hillary was serving as Mr Obama's Secretary of State, a position she stepped down from in January. The Tuesday session was closed to the press but Politico was supplied with audio recordings of the remarks made by an attendee.

"Nobody is asking for American soldiers in Syria," Mr Clinton said. "The only question is now that the Russians, the Iranians and the Hezbollah are in there head over heels, 90 miles to nothing, should we try to do something to try to slow their gains and rebalance the power so that these rebel groups have a decent chance, if they're supported by a majority of the people, to prevail?"

In discussion with Mr McCain, who is increasingly critical of Mr Obama's reluctance to intervene, Mr Clinton said Syria was not Iraq or Afghanistan. "My view is that we

shouldn't over-learn the lessons of the past," he said.

Mr Clinton made his doubts on Mr Obama's cautious stance known amid talk of divisions within the administration over whether to arm Syrian rebels.

US officials had hoped to reach a decision this week on supplying arms to opponents of President Bashar Assad. So far, however, there has been no announcement, and officials cited by Reuters said those closest to the president were split on the issue, as well as the possibility of more drastic steps such as using US airpower to ground Mr Assad's gunships and jets.

Mr Obama's top national security advisers met at the White House yesterday to discuss ways to motivate the government and the opposition to hold peace talks.

"Nobody wins in Syria the way things are going," Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters after meeting with British Foreign Secretary William Hague. "The people lose, and Syria as a country loses. And what we have been pushing for, all of us involved in this effort, is a political solution that ends the violence, saves Syria, stops the killing and destruction of the entire nation."

Mr Kerry, who postponed a trip this week to Israel and three other Mideast countries to participate in the White House talks, is believed to be among the most forward-leaning members of Mr Obama's national security leadership. Since becoming America's top diplomat in February, he has spoken

regularly about the need to change Mr Assad's calculation that he can win the war militarily, if only to get him into serious discussions with the opposition about establishing a transitional government.

Officials said some at the White House, the Pentagon and in the intelligence community remained hesitant about providing weapons, ammunition or other lethal support to a rebellion increasingly defined by extremists who, along with Mr Assad, have turned a political insurrection into a sectarian war. Instead, they've focused on nonlethal support, such as Wednesday's decision by the Treasury Department to ease restrictions on Syrian telecommunications, agricultural and petroleum transactions that benefit the opposition.

"We have refocused our efforts on figuring out what to do to help the opposition on the ground," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters, citing Mr Assad's military success last week at Qusair as well as the influx of Lebanese Hezbollah and other foreign fighters as reasons for why the US was rethinking its approach.

Even if nothing is decided this week, officials said the US, Britain and France, who together spearheaded the international intervention in Libya in 2011, were trying to coordinate a common approach before next week's G-8 gathering of world leaders. Russian President Vladimir Putin, Mr Assad's most powerful military and political backer, also will be present at the Northern Ireland summit.

The latest death toll is only likely to add to the sense of urgency. Meanwhile, in a separate report yesterday, the UN said that children were being used as sniper targets and human shields in the Syrian conflict.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in the report the 26-month-old war in Syria is taking an “unacceptable and unbearable” toll on children with thousands among the death toll. The office of UN special representative on children in conflict, Leila Zerrougui, said it had received “verified reports that Syrian children are killed or injured in indiscriminate bombings, shot by snipers, used as human shields or victims of terror tactics.”

The report said boys as young as 10 are used by armed groups to work as combatants and porters.

Meanwhile Mr Assad’s forces had used sexual violence against boys to obtain information or confessions, the special representative said. Child detainees as young as 14 were tortured like adults “including electric shock, beatings, stress positions and threats and acts of sexual torture,” according to the report.

Source:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10118274/Syria-death-toll-reaches-93000-UN.html>

William Hague: we must do more to help innocent Syrians

William Hague said Britain and its allies must “do more” to save innocent lives in Syria last night, after talks in Washington failed to yield any movement on calls to arm rebel fighters who are losing ground to resurgent Syrian government forces back by Iran and Hizbollah.

Speaking at a joint press conference in Washington with his US counterpart John Kerry, both men said they had “nothing to announce” when asked whether the US and its allies were preparing to give additional support to the rebels.

Mr Kerry and Mr Hague were speaking a day after Syrian rebels from the al-Qaeda-linked Nusra Front were accused of carrying out a sectarian massacre in which 60 Shia Muslim villagers were killed in Hatla, a settlement in the east of the country.

Mr Hague berated the Syrian president President Bashar al-Assad for waging “a campaign of murder and tyranny” that threatened to destabilise the entire Middle East region, and called for further action to reach a political solution in the conflict.

“The United Kingdom believes that the situation demands a strong, coordinated, and determined approach by the UK, the US, and our allies in Europe and the region,” said Mr Hague.

"We will have to be prepared to do more to save lives, to pressure the Assad regime to negotiate seriously and to prevent the growth of extremism and terrorism if diplomatic efforts are going to succeed," he warned.

Mr Kerry's language was more muted, however, speaking after a reported week of meetings with the White House and other US government agencies to discuss the "various balances in this issue right now".

Lobbyists for the Free Syrian Army in Washington have told The Telegraph that they are hoping for an expansion of US assistance from the current levels, which include food and medicine, to non-lethal military equipment such as body armour and night-vision goggles.

However a spokesman for the Syrian Support Group said they were not expecting imminent movement from the US.

The White House, which has consistently rebuffed calls for greater US intervention, also denied specific discussions were taking place, saying only that they were "constantly evaluating" the situation in Syria and that the Mr Obama wanted a "rigorous process" to assess whether to change US policy on the conflict.

"The situation on the ground continues to worsen with elevated levels of violence with the participation of Hezbollah and Iran," said Jay Carney, the White House spokesman, "And the President has made clear that he rules no option out and he's constantly evaluating his policy options." David Cameron confirmed

yesterday that Syria would be discussed at next week's G8 meeting in Ireland, but that no decision had been taken on whether to arm the rebels.

"What we want is not a continuation of conflict but what we want is a transition. We want to have a transitional government in which all of the Syrian people can have confidence," he told the Foreign Press Association.

"The only disagreement here politically in the UK, and I would argue probably across Europe, is how you get that transitional – how you get that transitional government. But I believe we're taking the right steps." In one small step, the US announced it had eased restrictions on trade with Syria's opposition, aimed at helping supply critical needs of Syrians in "liberated areas".

Source:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10117367/William-Hague-we-must-do-more-to-help-innocent-Syrians.html>



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