



**ORSAM**

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

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ  
ÖZGÜR DÜŞÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT  
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# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

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## 1. IRAQ

## 2. IRAN

## 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

## 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

## 6. SYRIA

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

*and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM** research assistant **Miray Başar**. It covers news*

## 1. IRAQ

### **Diwaniyah (AIN) –Diwaniyah First alliance was officially announced in Diwaniyah to form the local government.**

The reporter of All Iraq News Agency (AIN) stated "The new alliance comprises the Citizen bloc, al-Ahrar bloc, Diwaniyah Masses bloc and Dawa party."

The member of the Citizen bloc, Hussein al-Bidairi, stated in a press conference "The new alliance is considered the biggest alliance where it has 17 members out of 27," calling "The other blocs to join the new alliance."

MP, Hamid al-Khudhari, of the Citizen bloc stated "The new alliance represents the will of the citizens of Diwaniyah and it is welcomed by the central government because the local government could determine itself by itself."

The member, Jaafar al-Mosawi, of the Diwaniyah Masses bloc replied to a question rose over rejecting joining the State of Law Coalition, he said "T Diwaniyah Masses bloc is a political bloc and looks for its interest."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35589:diwaniyah-first-alliance-officially-announced-in-diwaniyah-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35589:diwaniyah-first-alliance-officially-announced-in-diwaniyah-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

### **MP Maliki calls ministers of IS to declare their final stance over returning to government**

In a press statement received by AIN, he said "The ministers of the IS must declare their final stance over suspending their attendance in the meetings of the Council of Ministers

because their ministries are for providing services to the citizens."

"Their justification is unacceptable where it is for the electoral propaganda," he added, calling the political blocs including the IS to "Declare a final stance over suspending the participation in the government where their resignations are necessary at the current time and for the interest of the Iraqi people."

Baghdad (AIN) –The Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari, discussed with the head of the Consult Department within the Jordanian FM, Ahmed al-Jaradat, the mutual relations and the issue of the Jordanian prisoners in the Iraqi prisons.

<http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/>

### **Zebari, Jordanian official discuss bilateral relations**

A statement by the FM received by AIN cited "Zebari met with Jaradat and the accompanying delegation comprises the representatives of the Jordanian FM and Justice Ministry in presence of the Jordanian Ambassador to Iraq, Mohammed Mustafa."

"The two sides discussed the mutual relations and the means of developing them in addition to the issue of the Jordanian prisoners in the Iraqi prisons," the statement added, noting that "Zebari assured the adherence of the government to follow the legal and humanitarian procedures regarding this issue."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35576:z](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35576:z)

[ebari-jordanian-official-discuss-bilateral-relations-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](#)

### **Attempt to detonate 2 Oil wells foiled in Kirkuk**

Kirkuk (AIN) –A security force managed to foil an attempt to detonate two Oil wells to the west of Kirkuk province.

Security source reported to AIN "The Explosive Ordinance Disposal Experts within the Oil Facilities Protection Service succeeded in foiling an attempt to detonate two Oil wells after discovering two Improvised Explosive Devices in Shahwaniya village of western Kirkuk province."

"The force received intelligence information that helped to dismantle the two IEDs without any human casualties or material damages," the source added.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35577:attempt-to-detonate-2-oil-wells-foiled-in-kirkuk&catid=36:security&Itemid=37](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35577:attempt-to-detonate-2-oil-wells-foiled-in-kirkuk&catid=36:security&Itemid=37)

### **Shimmari: Iraqi Government to release Jordanian prisoners inside Iraqi detentions**

Baghdad (AIN) -The Iraqi Minister of Justice, Hassan al-Shimmari, confirmed that the Iraqi Government is determined to consider the Jordanian request to release the Jordanian prisoners through a special pardon.

A statement by the Ministry of Justice received by AIN cited "Shimmari received the Jordanian Ambassador to Iraq, Mohamed Mustafa al-Qaraan, and the accompanied

delegation," noting that "Both sides stressed the necessity of upgrading bilateral relations between the two countries."

"Shimmari assured the importance of preserving the relations and to avoid the sides that aim at hindering them," the statement added.

"Shimmari expressed the Iraqi readiness to work according to Riyadh Agreement or to adopt the Arab Special Agreement to swap prisoners and to transfer the Jordanian prisoners to their country to spend the rest of their imprisonment there," the statement continued.

"The Ambassador expressed his gratitude for the Iraqi Government for its adherence to consolidate relations," the statement concluded.

Iraqi Governmental sources confirm that Iraq has 47 Jordanian prisoners inside the Iraqi prisons.

Earlier, Jordanian Premier Abdulla al-Nsour stated that Jordanian prisoners in Iraq will be transferred to Jordan soon to complete their verdicts.

Jordanian news agency added that Nsour said that the "Agreement nearly reached to final touches, just for formalities."

"It is expected that the Iraqi side will inform the Jordanian government the dates of their release," he concluded.

The Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan stressed on last Thursday that his government is keen on cooperating with the Jordanian Foreign Ministry to release Jordanians imprisoned in Iraq and conduct prisoner swap arrangements.

Ambassador Jawad Abbas said in a special interview that Iraqi premier, Nouri al-Maliki's

latest visit to Jordan last December discussed the release of Jordanians imprisoned in Iraq and the possibility of extraditing prisoners to serve the rest of their sentences in Jordan.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35575:shimmari-iraqi-government-to-release-jordanian-prisoners-inside-iraqi-detentions&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35575:shimmari-iraqi-government-to-release-jordanian-prisoners-inside-iraqi-detentions&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

### **Siheil, managers of Private Banks discuss improving banking sector**

Baghdad (AIN) -The First Deputy Speaker, Qusay al-Siheil, and Assembly of the Private Banks in Baghdad discussed the means of improving the performance of the banking sector and the impediments that hinder the performance of the banks.

A statement by Siheil office received by AIN cited "Siheil received the members of the Assembly at his office in Baghdad on Monday;" noting that "During the meeting, Siheil confirmed his support for the private sector especially the banking sector for its participation in the economic development."

"Both sides discussed the situation of the banks in Iraq and the prominent problems that faced them as well as the means to eliminate these problems," the statement added.

"The Managers of the Banks appreciated the parliament role in overcoming the impediments that hinder their work," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35571:siheil-managers-of-private-banks-discuss-improving-banking-sector&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35571:siheil-managers-of-private-banks-discuss-improving-banking-sector&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

### **Babel First Political Alliance formed**

Babel (AIN) -The political blocs in Babil province announced the formation of a new coalition called "Babel First" to form the local government in the province.

A spokesman for the Citizen Bloc, Abdul Razaq al-Nasrawi, said to the reporter and of All Iraq News Agency (AIN) that "The new alliance, which was announced at the headquarters of the political bureau of the Sadr Trend, comprises Citizen bloc, Ahrar bloc, National Unified Iraqiya coalition, Babel Iraqiya coalition, the list of Iraq My Homeland, Dawa Islamic Party/ Iraq Wing, and Civil Babylon alliance to have 16 members of the members of the provincial council out of 31 members."

Nasrawi added that "The new alliance will adopt the task of forming a local government," stressing that "The new alliance participates in ending the debate over the issue of forming the local government and distribution of positions in the province."

For his part, the spokesman for Ahrar bloc MP Awad al-Awadi, told AIN reporter that "The door is still open for other blocs to join the new alliance," noting that "The essential program for the [Babylon First] Alliance is based on a partnership rather than marginalization and exclusion of others."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35568:babel-first-political-alliance-formed-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35568:babel-first-political-alliance-formed-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

### **Fayad urges to make use of solar power to generate electric power**

Baghdad (AIN) -The deputy chairman of the parliamentary Commission of oil and energy, MP Ali al-Fayad, called the specialized authorities for making use of competent foreign companies to assist the national effort in the field of generating electric power.

The Ministry of Electricity confirmed more than once its efforts for providing electric power and meeting the needs of citizens through the end of 2013.

Al-Fayad told All Iraq News Agency (AIN) that "Many foreign companies are operating in the field of solar energy which can establish stations during six months to produce thousands megawatts of electric power and sell energy to the state with low cost to be paid through investment," noting that "We are supposed to cooperate with such companies."

He added "The Ministry of Electricity needs [30] thousand megawatts to cover all production projects, agricultural and industrial, including infrastructure and tourism in the country."

He explained that "The Committee directed the Ministry of Electricity to adopt contracting with investment companies to back the

national effort to cover what Iraq needs of electric power in general."

Al-Fayad held the Ministry of Electricity and Energy Committee in the Council of Ministers responsible for not reaching alternative plans to support the national effort through the investments of foreign companies.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35565:fayad-urges-to-make-use-of-solar-power-to-generate-electric-power&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35565:fayad-urges-to-make-use-of-solar-power-to-generate-electric-power&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

### **Justice Minister, Jordanian Ambassador to Iraq discuss Jordanian prisoners in Iraq's file**

Baghdad (AIN) -The Minister of Justice, Hassan al-Shimari announced that the Iraqi government is earnest to consider Jordan's request over including the Jordanian prisoners in Iraq in the private amnesty.

Governmental sources referred that the Jordanian prisoners in Iraq are 47 ones.

A statement by the MoJ reported that "While meeting the Jordanian Ambassador to Iraq, Mohamed Mustafa al-Qar'an, and his accompanying delegation on Monday in Baghdad, Shimari stressed the necessity to enhance the Iraqi-Jordanian bilateral relations on all levels."

"The Iraqi Minister urged to foil all attempts that seek to harm Iraq's relations with Jordan," highlighting Iraq's government and people's willingness to build strong relations

with Jordon based on mutual interests," according to the statement.

"For his part, the Ambassador of Jordon expressed his tribute and gratefulness to the Iraqi government for its desire to develop the bilateral relations between both countries, also he thanked Shimmi for his efforts to found extinct relations between Baghdad and Amman," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35559:justice-minister-jordanian-ambassador-to-iraq-discuss-jordanian-prisoners-in-iraqs-file-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35559:justice-minister-jordanian-ambassador-to-iraq-discuss-jordanian-prisoners-in-iraqs-file-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

#### **Sadrist MP attributes Maliki's call to change Saint Lego Law to his coalition's loss in local elections**

Baghdad (AIN) -MP Amir al-Kinani of the parliament Ahrar bloc associated to the Sadr Trend attributed the Premier Nouri al-Maliki's call to cancel the electoral system, Saint Lego Law, to his loss in the recent local elections in Iraq.

The Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki has called to change the current electoral system before conducting the coming legislative elections because it does not guarantee the political majority.

Kinani stated to All Iraq News Agency (AIN) "This law allows the votes of the small blocs to go to the large blocs to ensure the justice while Maliki thinks of changing the Saint Lego Law due to his coalition's loss in the last provincial elections."

"We have no problem with changing the law to prepare for the coming parliament elections, also we do not have problem with adopting the multiple circles law similar to that followed by the advanced countries," h added noting "We are with changing the current law but through coordinating with the Independent High Electoral Commission."

"In principle, the majority of the political blocs are convinced of Saint Lego except the State of Law Coalition where all the blocs positively voted on the law save the SLC, expecting that the idea of changing the Saint Lego Law will win acceptability to enact a new law that ensures justice."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=35553:sadrism-mp-attributes-malikis-call-to-change-saint-lego-law-to-his-coalitions-loss-in-local-elections-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35553:sadrism-mp-attributes-malikis-call-to-change-saint-lego-law-to-his-coalitions-loss-in-local-elections-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

## 2. IRAN

### Iran Exports Electricity Industry's Technical Services to 40 Countries

"Technical and engineering services of Iran's power industry are currently exported to 40 world countries," Iranian Energy Minister Majid Namjou said on Monday.

The Iranian energy minister noted that the export value of the Iranian power industry's technical and engineering services can exceed 12 billion tomans (\$4.8mln).

Iranian Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade Mehdi Qazanfari announced on Saturday that the country plans to increase the exports value of its technical and engineering services (in all the different sectors) to \$10bln in the current Iranian year (started March 21).

"We predict that the value of Iran's exports of technical and engineering services will exceed \$10 billion," Qazanfari said.

According to a report earlier this year, the value of Iran's exports of technical and engineering services has exceeded \$20bln in a 10-year period, and the country plans to export \$4.5bln worth of technical and engineering services by the end of the current Iranian year (ends March 20).

According to a report by Iran's Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), the value of Iran's technical and engineering services exports is slated to hit \$4.5bln by March 20.

In February, an Iranian economic official expressed pleasure in the eye-catching growth

in Iran's non-oil exports, and said that the volume of the country's non-oil exports is slated to surpass \$50bln by the end of the current Iranian year.

"A total of 2,000 export agencies do export work in the country and by the yearend the (non-oil) export will exceed \$50bln," Head of the Exports Commission of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture Asadollah Asgaroladi.

In October, an informed trade ministry official said that Iran exported engineering services and products to 17 countries from March 20 to September 21.

Head of TPO Hamid Safdel said that \$1.8 billion worth of engineering contracts and agreements including 28 projects have been signed by Iranian companies in 17 countries in the first six months of the current Iranian year.

Safdel referred to the export of 37 million tons of engineering commodities, and added that over \$21 million of such products were exported in the mentioned six months.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203181064>

### Iran, Iraqi Kurdistan to Further Expand Trade Cooperation

The issue was raised in a meeting between heads of Iran's Khorramabad and Iraq's Soleymanieh Chambers of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture in Northeastern Iraq on Sunday.

During the meeting in Iraq's Northeastern Kurdish city of Soleymanieh, Hossein Selahvarzi and Mohammad Taher Mostafa signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) on mutual trade cooperation.

Iran and the Iraqi Kurdistan region have enjoyed growing ties ever since the overthrow of the former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, during the 2003 US invasion of the Muslim country.

A senior Iraqi Kurdish official announced in July that the value of the trade ties between Iran and Iraqi Kurdistan region will exceed \$4bln this year thanks to the two sides' growing cooperation.

"This year, the maximum value of our trade activities will exceed \$4bln and such a boost is certainly the result of further cooperation," Representative of the Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Nazzem Dabbaq told FNA at the time, adding that the value of bilateral trade ties with Iran was \$100 million in 2000.

He voiced Kurdistan's willingness to boost trade ties with Iran, and noted, "The present and the future of Iran and Kurdistan are tied to each other. They should always have continued contacts with each other."

Also in July, Deputy Head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan Barham Salih was in Iran to explore avenues for the further development of the bilateral relations between the two sides.

During the five-day trip, Salih discussed consolidation of PUK relations with Iran as

well as the role, importance and expansion of Iraq's ties with the Islamic Republic.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180902>

### **Official Downplays Effectiveness of Western Sanctions on Iran's Auto Industry**

The remarks were made by Head of the Board of Directors of the Industrial Development and Renovation Organization of Iran (IDRO) Gholam Reza Shafeyee in Tehran on Monday.

"Sanctions cannot make Iran halt its activities in the auto industry," Shafeyee said.

The US has imposed more sanctions on Iran earlier this month targeting the Islamic republic's currency and auto industry.

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.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180836>

#### **Assad: Syria Seeks Hezbollah Model for Resistance in Golan**

Lebanon's Al-Akhbar daily quoted Assad as affirming that the mean game played by the West and its allies will come to an end.

He further revealed that the western countries have recently rushed to offer under-the-table great deals to guarantee their shares in construction, oil and gas extraction, given the fact that large amount of reserves were discovered along the Syrian coast, Alahednews reported.

"Even the World Bank, which totally moves based on US orders, offered me a "generous" deal: \$21 billion loan with concessional terms, showing a wish in financing all the reconstruction projects," Assad unveiled.

He also hinted that the Bank's offer was passed through the Godfather of privatization in Syria Abdallah al-Dardari.

Assad, according to al-Akhbar, totally rejected the offer as he took his final decisions regarding all the reconstruction offers.

In parallel, the Syrian President stated that "all what preoccupies his thinking in the current stage is the war aftermath, particularly how to deal with this huge devastation that hit various Syrian regions and how to ease the pain of people who lost their loved ones, homes, fortune, and livelihood sources."

Assad also expressed his deep and great concern over the spread of sectarianism in the other Arab countries.

"Sectarianism disease represents a serious threat to the existence of the nation and its future. Thus, we should work hard to confront and eradicate it," the daily quoted al-Assad as saying.

Regarding the opening of the Golan front, Assad stressed that this issue is serious.

However, he confirmed that he is not thinking about establishing a formal resistance that launches random shells from time to time. "This will leave the enemy with an upper hand."

"We seek to establish a real continuous well-organized and effective resistance which draws the battle field based on its interests just like the Resistance of Hezbollah in South Lebanon," Al-Assad added.

Moreover, the head of the Syrian state didn't forget his friends.

"We granted the right to extract Syrian oil to a Russian company," he said, expressing full confidence that the Russians will not change their position in Syria.

Al-Assad also highlighted that Russia is in fact defending its security and strategic national interests, which will be threatened if the West and its followers managed to put their hands on Syria.

On the reconstruction level, he clarified that the Chinese companies are ready to do their part in this area. "We reached an agreement on this level."

Assad said that he is not very positive that Geneva 2 will lead to great results because those who will be sitting on the other side of the table will not be able to decide for the armed groups on the ground, and also because opposition sides inside and outside Syria are divided due to many disputes.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180988>

### **Iran nuclear plant suffers generator malfunction**

MOSCOW - Iran's Russian-built nuclear power plant has experienced technical problems with its generator and experts are working to resolve the issue, Tehran's envoy to Moscow said on Monday.

Ambassador Mahmoud Reza Sajjadi said there was "absolutely no link" between this problem at the Bushehr plant - which was shut down when U.N. nuclear inspectors went there in mid-May - and a powerful earthquake that shook the region two months ago.

The facility on Iran's Gulf coast is a growing worry for nearby countries: if radiation ever does escape it could be blown over the Gulf to Qatar's capital Doha and the main oil exporting ports of the United Arab Emirates.

Earlier this year, reports by the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Iran had informed inspectors visiting the plant in mid-February and again last month that the plant was shut down but gave no details.

"The one problem in the working of the nuclear power plant at Bushehr occurred with the generator," Sajjadi told a news conference, without saying when it happened. "We are working very closely with Russian specialists to resolve the issue."

Tehran repeatedly has rejected safety concerns about the reactor, which began operations in 2011 after decades of delays. Iran and the Russian company that built Bushehr said it was not affected by the April earthquake.

This past Sunday, Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi dismissed suggestions that a natural disaster could pose a threat to the plant's durability.

"The propaganda by certain countries regarding concerns over the security of this power plant is baseless," the foreign minister was quoted as saying by official state media.

In April, at least 35 people died and over 800 were injured after a 6.1 earthquake struck the town of Kaki, just 90 kilometers southeast of

Bushehr. The Iranian government insists, however, that the plant was not harmed by the quake.

<http://www.ipost.com/Defense/Iran-nuclear-plant-suffers-generator-malfunction-316032>

### 3. ISRAEL- PALESTINE

#### Israeli Forces Detain 7 Palestinians in Hebron Raids

An Israeli military force raided houses in Dura village and detained al-Mutaz Bellah Munther Abu Attwan, al-Ghadnfar Aykhman Mousa Abu Attwan, and Abdullah Maher Abdullah Abu Sharar, Ma'an reported.

Soldiers also raided Yatta, a Palestinian village in the same district of Hebron, and detained Muhammad al-Rabei. They also detained Islam Shanan from the city of Hebron.

They detained two Palestinians from al-Arrub refugee camp.

Soldiers raided the camp in the early morning hours and entered several houses there. They detained Maher Abu Warda, 19, and Nidal Jamal al-Balasi, 24.

Clashes broke out between Palestinians and Israeli forces before they left the camp.

<http://english.farsnews.com/>

#### Israeli Forces Shoot, Injure Farmer in Southern Gaza

Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for Gaza's health ministry, told Ma'an that a 21-year-old farmer

was seriously wounded after being shot in the chest by Israeli soldiers stationed near the border.

The incident took place East of Khan Younis and the man was transferred to hospital and is said to be in a critical condition.

An Israeli army spokesman did not return calls seeking comment.

Last week, Ahmad Hamdin, 21, was shot by Israeli soldiers East of Jabalia, Northern Gaza, while picking watermelons.

Since the November ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Israeli forces have shot and killed three people in the Gaza Strip and injured at least 60, amid numerous incursions into border areas of the coastal territory.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180936>

#### Assad aims for 'lasting' resistance against Israel

Jordanian opposition elements claim Syrian president considering calculated, carefully planned resistance similar to Hezbollah activity in southern Lebanon

Bashar Assad continues to issue threats against Israel. A week after saying his people are pressuring him to open a front in the Golan Heights, the Syrian president reportedly said that opening a Golan front "is a very serious matter."

Assad reportedly made the statements during meetings with Jordanian opposition elements, according to Lebanese newspaper al-Akhbar.

One of the Jordanians quoted Assad as saying that the Syrians are ruling out "formal resistance" for show, with the odd missile being fired at Israel.

Assad is instead aiming for "calculated, carefully planned and lasting resistance" similar to Hezbollah 's activity in southern Lebanon.

Jordanian sources told the paper that the Syrian president noted that the World Bank had presented him with a "generous offer." Assad was reportedly offered a loan of \$21 billion for the funding of reconstruction projects in Syria but turned it down.

The report further stated that Assad said he would allow a Russian company to produce oil off the Syrian coast. He stressed that he is confident Moscow will continue to stand by Syria as its national interests are at stake.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that Israel's guiding principle is "whoever threatens to hurt Israel – will be hurt."

Speaking at the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Netanyahu said: "We're seeing a new Middle East and it is seething, loud and very volatile. It is especially so in the northern border with Syria. We are working with these developments with great responsibility, judgment and determination."

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4390404,00.html>

## **PA objects to Israel's Western Wall construction plans**

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.

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/PA-objects-to-Israelis-Western-Wall-construction-plans-316375>

### **Israel-EU formally sign 'Open Skies' agreement**

Some two months after Israeli airlines went on a brief strike to block the Israeli-EU "Open Skies" agreement, the two sides inked the accord in Luxembourg on Monday, paving the way for more direct flights between Israel and EU countries.

The European Union issued a statement saying that the deal was signed on the sidelines of the EU Transport Council meeting.

When the agreement comes into effect in 2018, EU airlines will be able to operate direct flights to Israel from anywhere in the EU, and

Israeli carriers will be able to operate flights to airports throughout the EU.

"The EU-Israel air transport market will be opened gradually over the next five years, so that by 2018, the market will be fully open with no restrictions on the number of flights," the EU statement said.

The agreement is expected to encourage greater direct connections, which in turn could drive down prices. Under the agreement, according to the EU statement, Israel will "implement regulatory requirements and standards equivalent to EU aviation rules in areas such as aviation safety, environment, consumer protection, including passenger rights, air traffic management, economic regulation, competition issues and social aspects."

The brief Israeli airline strike over the deal in late April ended when the Finance Ministry agreed to increase the share it pays of airline security costs from 70 to 97.5 percent.

The Israeli airlines went on strike saying they were concerned that Open Skies agreement would result in layoffs at the Israeli airlines.

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Israel-EU-formally-sign-Open-Skies-agreement-316038>

### **Israel avoids US debate on arming Syrian rebels**

At Knesset meeting, Netanyahu makes clear Israel not getting involved on discussion over arming opposition forces in Syria.

With the Obama administration set to hold meetings this week on whether to arm opposition forces in Syria, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu made clear on Monday that Israel was not getting involved in that discussion.

“Israel does not take sides in the Syrian civil war,” Netanyahu said in a meeting of the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

The official said that when asked, Netanyahu’s standard reply is that it is necessary to “think carefully about which arms, and which rebels.”

Netanyahu also referred to talk about undercover Israeli soldiers fighting in Syria “nonsense.”

Netanyahu told the committee that Iran is keeping Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime alive and has instructed Hezbollah to actively fight in Syria.

“Iran is sending Assad money, resources and experts.

For 40 years there was quiet in the Syrian arena, and it could be that this is changing before our eyes,” he added.

According to Netanyahu, Syria decided to transfer advanced weaponry to Hezbollah in larger quantities than before. These weapons transfers are the result of an Iranian decision that could change the balance of power.

“Israel will do all it can to prevent these weapons from being transferred to

Hezbollah,” he added. “We have a clear policy to prevent this.”

International Relations Minister Yuval Steinitz reiterated Israel’s policy of staying clear of Syria’s strife unless Israel becomes a target of Syrian fire.

Asked on Israel Radio about Israel’s position on the debate in Washington, Steinitz said that since Israel does not want to get involved in the Syrian battles, it also does not want to give anyone ammunition to say that Israel is involved.

“Each side there is trying to say that we support the other,” he said. “We were not asked by Washington in one way or another.

We are not interfering in Syria, and the world – the US – will weigh their own steps.”

Speaking to foreign reporters in Jerusalem later on Monday, Steinitz warned that Assad’s government “might not just survive but even regain territories.”

Regarding Assad’s threat to open a front against Israel on the Golan, Steinitz said that though he doubted this would happen, caution demanded that Israel be prepared for every scenario, even “the craziest.”

Refusing to relate to whether Israel would be more cautious in the future about attacking weapons systems being transferred from Syria to Hezbollah, something foreign reports have said Israel has done three times in the last year, Steinitz said that his advice to Assad was to carefully weigh his steps toward Israel.

“We are not interfering in the Syrian civil war, not on this side or the other. We are not intervening at all, despite the horrible tragedy that is happening close to us,” Steinitz said.

While emphasizing that Israel also had no interest in interfering in the future, he added that “it would be better for him [Assad] not to test us with provocations.

“We will defend ourselves,” he said. “And if Assad thinks that he can carry out a war of attrition against us on the Golan Heights, I suggest that he think again, because he could act in a manner that would endanger his existence and that of his regime. I’m sure that is not his intention, so he should be very careful.”

Assad issued a strong warning to Israel, saying that he is completely serious in opening up the Golan front against Israel, Lebanese paper Al-Akhbar reported on Monday.

The resistance will not launch primitive rockets aimlessly from time to time, but will carry out a well-planned and continuous resistance, Assad reportedly said to a group of visiting Jordanians. He added that Israeli attacks will elicit a strategic, rather than a local response.

His mention of randomly fired rockets could be a slap at Hamas, which often relies on this tactic when firing rockets from Gaza.

Hamas left its former base in Damascus in 2012, deciding to support fellow Sunnis fighting in the Syrian opposition. The move angered Syria and its ally Iran, which has

decreased its support for the movement as a result.

Instead, he compared this resistance to the kind waged by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, according to the report.

In regard to Russia, Assad explained that it has not attempted to dictate a position on the country’s conflict.

Assad told Al-Manar TV in May that “there is pressure by the people to open a new front on the Golan. Even among the Arab world there is a clear readiness to join the fight against Israel.”

Assad stated that Hezbollah is involved in fighting the Israeli enemy and its agents in Syria and Lebanon. He attributed the failure of the Syrian opposition to its dependence on outside funding and said that it failed to create a real rift in the country.

Assad also said that he sees the balance of power in Syria shifting to the government’s side. And this is despite the fact that the “terrorists” are smuggling fighters and weapons through all of the borders.

In relation to Israel, he said, “If we want to respond to Israel, the response must be strategic.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Israel-stays-clear-of-US-debate-on-arming-Syrian-rebels-316060>

#### 4. AFRICA- EGYPT

**Saudi Commentator Jailed for Anti-Wahhabi Tweeter**

Hamad's arrest in December 2012 followed a tip by Saudi religious organizations. The arrest warrant was signed by Saudi Interior Minister Prince Mohammad bin Nayef bin Abdel Aziz, press tv reported.

On June 5, attorney Walid Abulkhair said his client, Hamad, "returned home this morning".

The Saudi writer "has not been put on trial, and has not faced any charges", Abulkhair stated.

Some 500 supporters of Hamad, including Saudi intellectuals, had signed a petition in January, calling on Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz to order the release of the prominent author.

Hamad's messages on Twitter had been critical of radical Wahhabi clerics in Saudi Arabia, whom he claimed were misinterpreting and twisting the "message of love" by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The Saudi writer also characterized the emergence of Wahhabism as "a neo-Nazism on the rise in the Arab world".

Last year, Saudi officials also arrested young blogger Hamza Kashgari over 'blasphemy' charges.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180970>

**Saudi Forces Nab Nearly 150 Government Protesters**

Regime forces in Saudi Arabia detained about 150 people for participation in rallies held in several cities, demanding the release of political prisoners.

The whereabouts of the detainees, reportedly nabbed on Wednesday, are still unknown, press tv reported.

The protests were held despite a strict ban by the Saudi regime on anti-government rallies.

Saudi Arabia has been the scene of frequent protests since early 2011. Over a dozen demonstrators have been killed and many arrested in the regime's crackdown during the past two years.

Saudi activists say there are more than 40,000 political prisoners, mostly prisoners of conscience, in jails across the Kingdom.

According to the activists, most of the detained political thinkers are being held by the government without trial or legitimate charges and have been arrested for merely looking suspicious.

Some of the detainees are reported to be held without trial for more than 16 years. Attempting to incite the public against the government and the allegiance to foreign entities are usually the ready-made charges against political dissidents.

In Saudi Arabia, protests and political gatherings of any kind are prohibited.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203181898>

### **Former Brotherhood member Mustafa Al-Naggar warns that counter-rallies by Islamists**

Mubarak-era corruption 'greater than we imagined,' Egypt's Morsi tells Al-Ahram  
Former MP Mustafa Al-Naggar has warned that the anticipated violence on 30 June could mark the beginning of a "full-scale civil war" in Egypt, calling on Islamists not to stage counter protests against anti-Morsi demonstrators.

The Rebel campaign, a signature drive aims at gathering 15 million endorsements to withdraw confidence from President Mohamed Morsi, has called for mass protests at the presidential palace 30 June.

While the turnout of protesters is expected to be high, with many political forces and remnants of the former regime eager to participate, figures from the Muslim Brotherhood, from which Morsi hails from, and other Islamist forces announced they would hold a counter-rally.

"Considering staging counter-rallies would mean the beginning of a full-scale civil war. That's not an exaggeration," Al-Naggar said on his Twitter account.

He also highlighted what he described as "severe indictments from religious [TV] channels against the [anti-Morsi] 30 June protesters, and accusations that they are criminals and saboteurs."

"I was shocked by those who tried to make it look as if it is a confrontation between Islam

and infidels ... Reasonable people have to stop this incitement and accusations of betrayal, because it will result in Egyptians' bloodshed."

Al-Naggar, who some years ago belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood, the group from which President Morsi hails, called on protesters to be peaceful and for state authorities to protect them.

Last December, clashes erupted after Morsi supporters arrived at the presidential palace where an opposition sit-in and protest was taking place against the 22 November 2012 constitutional declaration. Both sides swapped accusations of responsibility for the violence, claiming that the seven killed were from their respective camps.

After bloody confrontations, a number of videos circulating on the Internet showed civilians being tied up, physically abused and interrogated by bearded men in the vicinity of the presidential palace.

One of the victims was a former Egyptian diplomat, Yehia Negm, who alleged during an interview with Al-Hayat TV channel that Brotherhood members tortured him for several hours.

In March, a host of protesters gathered at the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood to protest against "Brotherhood rule." A number were assaulted by members of the Islamic group, as videos and photos showed.

Anti-Brotherhood protesters were infuriated because Mervat Moussa, political activist and member of Egypt's Popular Current movement, was knocked out with a slap

across her face by a Brotherhood supporter at the group's HQ in earlier confrontations.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/73507/Egypt/Politics-/Ex-Egyptian-MP-Naggar-warns-of-fullscale-civil-war.aspx>

### **Spain Arrests Five Tunisians on Terrorism Promotion Charges**

Five Tunisian men living in Barcelona, Spain were arrested today on charges of disseminating “materials with jihadi content” through social networks, according to the Spanish Ministry of Interior’s website.

The ministry posted pictures of the five Tunisian men: Kamel Boulehmi, Sabri Riahi, Sassi Ghrab, Hamed Ben Dhaou and Ali Ben Tahar Ghazouani.

The suspects are believed by Spanish authorities to have undergone “an intense process of self-radicalization” that led them to embrace the beliefs of “jihadist salafism.”

The Spanish Ministry of Interior stated that this arrest is part of an ongoing investigation that has been carried out since the beginning of 2012.

The materials allegedly disseminated consist of photographs and videos containing images relating to terrorist and “jihadi” acts. They reportedly contain “links leading directly or indirectly to websites deemed as ‘jihadist’ and tied – or very close to – the international terrorist organization Al Qaeda.”

The ministry also stated that inputs and records in the homes of detainees are currently being analyzed.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/06/12/spain-arrests-five-tunisians-on-terrorism-promotion-charges/>  
**Ennahdha Secretary General Opposes Bill Excluding Ben Ali Officials**

Two of Tunisia’s most important political figures met separately on Tuesday with Prime Minister Ali Laarayedh to discuss a controversial piece of legislation that could prevent one of them, Beji Caid Essebsi, from running for president and could also exclude many others from serving in government.

The bill in question, dubbed the “Law for Protection of the Revolution,” would prohibit those who held positions in pre-revolutionary regimes from serving in the new government.

Essebsi is the founder of the Nidaa Tounes (Call of Tunisia) opposition party and is the party’s nominee for the presidency; however, he served for many years under Tunisia’s first two presidents, Habib Bourguiba and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, from the 1960s to the 1990s. Essebsi would thus be excluded from holding an official office if the new legislation is passed.

Laarayedh also met with Hamadi Jebali, his predecessor in the Prime Ministry and the secretary general of the ruling Ennahdha party.

Jebali and Essebsi met separately with Laarayedh, but they talked with one another in the hallway and addressed the media

together after their meetings, according to Nidaa Tounes executive director Ridha Belhaj.

Jebali has publicly opposed the law, despite considerable support for it within his party.

“We have suffered enough from exclusion during the reign of a tyrannical and despotic regime. We have to return to liberty of expression and opinion. We have to leave these issues to the judiciary so that Ennahdha and the other parties are able to build the basis of democracy,” Jebali told the media Tuesday, according to radio station Mosaïque FM.

In an interview given to the newspaper Al Joumhouria, Nouredine Harbaoui, the president of Ennahdha’s executive bureau, said that Jebali’s statements do not represent the party as a whole, although there are others in Ennahdha who agree with him.

“It is not only Jebali who holds such a stance, but also Samir Dilou, the Minister of Human Rights, and even [Ennahdha leader] Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi,” said Harbaoui in the Al Joumhouria interview.

Harbaoui said that while the majority of Ennahdha’s Shura Council – which decides the party’s policy positions – supports the bill, Dilou and Ghannouchi would be content if a separate piece of legislation concerning transitional justice were passed instead, according to Al Joumhouria.

Although the law was reportedly a focus of the discussion between Essebsi and Laarayedh, Essebsi did not focus on it in his comments to the media, saying only that he

was invited by Laarayedh for a discussion concerning the current state of affairs in Tunisia, according to the Tunisian newspaper La Presse.

“Our discussion was fresh and clear,” La Presse quoted Essebsi as saying. “I found the prime minister aware of the seriousness of the problems facing the country and willing to resolve them. I also felt a convergence of views with the PM on several discussions.”

Ridha Belhaj, the executive director of Nidaa Tounes, told Tunisia Live that the law aims to eliminate political opponents and to make it easier for those currently in government to hold on to power.

“It’s not about the protection of the revolution, but the protection of Ennahdha,” Belhaj claimed.

Belhaj disputed the assertion that any Ennahdha members other than Jebali are against the draft legislation.

“Ghannouchi will say what people want to hear, but his real view is that he’s favoring the draft law,” he said, asserting that the Ennahdha leader was just trying to please listeners.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/06/12/party-leaders-discuss-bill-excluding-pre-revolution-officials-from-government/#sthash.YOGT2nfi.dpuf>

**Ethiopia to press ahead with Nile dam, not depend on Egypt's will**

Ethiopia will press ahead with the construction of its Grand Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River, officials said Thursday, the day after Egypt warned "all options are open" if its water supply is affected.

"We are going to continue with our project, I don't think it will depend on the will of politicians in Egypt," said Getachew Reda, spokesman for Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.

"As far as the will of the Ethiopian government and the will of the Ethiopian people are concerned, there shouldn't be any question whatsoever about the Renaissance Dam, it will continue," he added.

Ethiopia last week began diverting the Blue Nile some 500 metres (yards) from its natural course, sparking anger from some Egyptian politicians.

The Blue Nile joins the White Nile in the Sudanese capital Khartoum to form the Nile which then flows through Egypt.

Egypt on Wednesday said it would demand that Ethiopia end construction of the massive dam, which is being built at a cost of \$4.2 billion.

"Other people have a right to seek their own interests. But there must be guarantees that the Ethiopian dam will not harm Egypt, otherwise all options are open," said Ayman Ali, an Egyptian presidential adviser, in comments carried by the official MENA news agency..

The first phase with an output of 700 MW is expected to be completed in 2016, when the massive hydroelectric project will have a capacity of 6000 MW.

Cairo believes more studies are needed of the dam's impact on its water supply which is almost entirely dependent on the Nile, and it

has rejected a report by international experts which minimizes the impact on upstream river levels.

Getachew stood by the report and said "spin masters" should not selectively accept and reject the report's findings.

"It is not for Egypt to select the part of the findings they agree with and the part they don't agree with," he told AFP.

He said relations between the two countries remain friendly, and dismissed the possibility of a military confrontation as "the stuff of science fiction, not reality."

The presidency in Egypt has said the dam is a national security issue.

Ethiopia has invited Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi for talks on the dam, according to Getachew, though stopping construction "is not going to be negotiated," he added.

Egypt believes its "historic rights" to the Nile are guaranteed by two treaties from 1929 and 1959 which allow it 87 percent of the Nile's flow and give it veto power over upstream projects.

But a new deal was signed in 2010 by other Nile Basin countries, including Ethiopia, allowing them to work on river projects without Cairo's prior agreement.

Ethiopia is building several dams throughout the country, with the ultimate aim of exporting electricity to neighbouring countries including Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/2/9/73376/World/International/Ethiopia-to-press-ahead-with-Nile-dam,-not-depend-.aspx>

**Kuwaiti PM Arrives in Iraq's Baghdad**

Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrived Wednesday in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on an official visit to meet with Iraqi leaders, a foreign ministry source said.

The Kuwaiti PM and his accompanying delegation will meet with Iraqi leaders to discuss means to enhance the bilateral relations as well as political development in the region, the state media said.

A source from the Iraqi foreign ministry told Xinhua by telephone that the one-day visit of the Kuwaiti delegation will discuss how to solve the pending issues between the two countries which will help to end the UN sanction (known as "Chapter Seven" sanctions) imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The visiting guest will meet with his Iraqi counterpart Nuri al-Maliki and Parliament Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi, the source added.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203181858>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

### Srcour meets US ambassador, families of Jordanian prisoners in Israel

AMMAN — Lower House Speaker Saad Hayel Srcour and US Ambassador to Jordan Stuart Jones on Wednesday discussed regional developments, especially the situation in Syria and the Palestinian issue.

Also on Wednesday, Srcour met with family members of Jordanian prisoners in Israel, who staged a sit-in outside the Parliament.

The delegates presented a petition to Srcour listing their demands, mainly better healthcare for their sons, arranging visits to the prisoners and allowing them to complete their jail terms in Jordan.

During the meeting, attended by several MPs, Srcour pledged to follow up on their issue with Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour and other officials.

<http://jordantimes.com/srcour-meets-us-ambassador-families-of-jordanian-prisoners-in-israel>

### Kataeb: Salam should stop delaying Cabinet formation

"[We urge Salam to] abandon the policy of waiting because there may be a orchestrated plan to keep him as a suspended prime minister by tying the formation process to never-ending [deadlines] with the aim of ... keeping the country without a government," the party said in a statement after its weekly meeting headed by former President Amin Gemayel.

The views of the Kataeb were echoed earlier by Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea who urged Salam, nominated as premier-designate on April 6, to get on with the task of forming his Cabinet.

The previous government stepped down at the end of March.

In its statement, the Kataeb also condemned the weekend killing of a protester outside the Iranian Embassy, describing the death of

Hashem Salman as an “orchestrated assassination.”

Salman, 28, was shot and killed at a rally outside the Iranian embassy Sunday while protesting Hezbollah’s involvement in the Syrian conflict.

The party urged authorities to arrest the culprits and that they be referred to the courts immediately.

It also condemned Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria, describing it as an “abuse to the state’s [foreign] policy and the ‘Baabda Declaration,’” referring to a non-interference with Syria pledge.

It warned that Hezbollah’s actions in Syria harmed Lebanon’s position at the Arab League.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jun-10/219940-kataeb-salam-should-stop-delaying-cabinet-formation.ashx#ixzz2W5nqp1mH>

### **Parliament extension issue comes to a head**

The Constitutional Council will decide this week on petitions contesting the extension of Parliament’s term amid reported political pressure on its members to accept the challenge. Issam Suleiman, president of the 10-member body, is expected to present his report on the challenge to the council Monday. The half-Muslim, half-Christian council will decide on Suleiman’s report later this week.

Political sources said the council’s five Christian members were coming under pressure by politicians to accept the challenges against the extension of Parliament’s mandate filed earlier this month by President Michel Sleiman and MP Michel Aoun’s parliamentary Change and Reform bloc.

A decision would require the support of at least seven members.

A March 8 source said the council’s final decision on the challenge hinged largely on the stance of its two Sunni members. If the two Sunni members join the five Christian members in accepting the challenge, the council will decide in favor of the challenge, the source told The Daily Star.

Baabda MP Alain Aoun, a member of Aoun’s bloc, told The Daily Star he hoped the council would strike down the extension. “We hope that the Constitutional Council accepts the challenge. But if it decides otherwise, the council will have acted with political motives because the legally binding reasons for the extension of Parliament’s term are unconvincing.”

Echoing this, caretaker Tourism Minister Fadi Abboud, from Michel Aoun’s Free Patriotic Movement, predicted that the challenge would be accepted. “There’s no legal reason for not accepting the challenge against the extension of Parliament’s mandate because the reasons cited [for the extension] are illogical,” Abboud said in a statement.

Citing security concerns in the country, in addition to their own failure to agree on a new electoral law, 97 members of the 128-member Parliament endorsed a draft law on May 31 to extend the legislature's four-year mandate for 17 months and delay the polls until November 2014. That mandate would have expired June 20,

As a compromise to both the supporters and opponents of the extension, the Constitutional Council may reduce the 17-month period to eight months, a political source said.

Prime Minister-designate Tammam Salam was still waiting for the outcome of the challenges against the extension of Parliament's term before resuming his talks on the Cabinet formation.

While the rival factions remained split over the shape, makeup and role of the new government, the formation process has been further complicated by Hezbollah's heavy involvement in the Syrian fighting. Some March 14 politicians say it is impossible for the party to join any new Cabinet before it withdraws its fighters from Syria.

Hezbollah warned Sunday against attempts to exclude it from the new Cabinet, saying that the conditions set by March 14 politicians could destabilize the country.

Mohammad Fneish, Hezbollah's caretaker minister of state for administrative reform, said that "some people have begun raising high ceilings [conditions], and they don't want to learn from their experience. We say to those people: Don't raise ceilings you can't

protect because this country can be ruled only by partnership, agreement and balance."

"Any other talk will plunge the country into an open crisis. Therefore, you will bear responsibility for threatening stability and internal peace as well as for damaging the livelihood of the Lebanese because they need a government and institutions that can meet [their] socioeconomic demands."

Hezbollah MP Hasan Fadlallah called for the formation of an all-embracing government capable of confronting the challenges in the country.

"Those who want to impose conditions on the nature of our participation [in the government] are exhausting themselves," Fadlallah told a ceremony in the southern village of Majdal Zoun to mark one week since a Hezbollah fighter died in battle in Syria.

The Future Movement, the leading party in the March 14 coalition, has advocated the formation of a nonpartisan government that excludes all major political parties.

But the Hezbollah-led March 8 alliance has demanded the formation of a political or national unity government in which all major parties are represented according to their size in Parliament. Hezbollah and its March 8 allies also insist on a veto power in the new Cabinet, something which Salam has vowed not to grant to any party.

Progressive Socialist Party leader MP Walid Jumblatt renewed his call for Hezbollah to be represented in the new Cabinet. "I believe in the principle of Hezbollah's participation in

the government, whether directly or indirectly, since it is not possible to isolate anyone or abolish anyone," Jumblatt told As-Safir newspaper.

"Forming a new government has become highly necessary in order to move differences from the streets and tackle them on the Cabinet's table," Jumblatt added, referring to bloody clashes between supporters and opponents of Syrian President Bashar Assad in the city of Tripoli that have left 33 people dead.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2013/Jun-10/219870-parliament-extension-issue-comes-to-a-head.ashx#ixzz2W5objluf>

## 6. SYRIA

### Jordan hosts US missile drills in Syria's shadow

Washington sends F-16 jets and anti-aircraft missiles to Jordan for drill, says may consider to keep them there.

Washington confirmed last week it was sending the F-16 jets and missiles - which can be used against planes and other missiles - to its ally Jordan, and said it may consider keeping them there after the drills.

But the Damascus government, and its most powerful ally Moscow, have been sensitive about any transfer of Western arms closer to the conflict, particularly any gear that could be used to enforce a no-fly zone.

More than 4,500 American troops, around 3,000 Jordanians, and 500 soldiers from Britain, Saudi Arabia and other countries were taking part in the exercises, less than 75 miles (120 km) from the Syrian border, said military officials.

"The drills having nothing to do with any objective related to what is happening in Syria," the top army commander in charge of Jordanian troops, Major General Awni al-Adwan, told reporters during the launch of the exercises on Sunday.

US Major General Robert G. Catalanotti told a joint news conference the Eager Lion events would increase "our ability to operate together in any upcoming contingency".

The exercises also involved a number of F-18 jets from bases in the Gulf and drills on handling chemical strikes, which Syria's government and rebels have accused each other of carrying out.

### PRIVATE REQUESTS

Jordan is one of a number of Arab countries that have lent support to the Syrian opposition, caught up in the two-year-old civil war.

Jordan, like Syria's other neighbors, is increasingly nervous that the fighting will spill over and ignite a regional conflict.

US President Barack Obama has been reluctant to become involved despite having called for Assad to resign and hinting at military action if the Syrian government

crossed a "red line" by using chemical weapon. He has shown some willingness to protect friends in the region.

Jordanian officials privately say they requested that at least two Patriots are kept after the end of the exercises to guard against any missile attack from Syria.

Western diplomats say Washington has favourably responded to the request to bolster its ally's security.

Moscow complained vociferously last year when the United States, Germany and the Netherlands deployed Patriots on Syria's northern border in Turkey, a NATO ally.

Russia complained again after Washington confirmed its deployment of missiles and jets to Jordan last week.

"We have more than once stated our opinion on this - foreign weapons are being pumped into an explosive region," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Alexander Lukashevich said in a statement on June 4.

"This is happening very close to Syria, where for more than two years the flames are burning of a devastating conflict that Russia and its American partners are trying to stop by proposing to hold an international peace conference as soon as possible."

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Jordan-hosts-US-missile-drills-in-Syrias-shadow-315992>

**Photo released by Observatory shows Qataa's face with mouth and jaw destroyed, as well as a bullet wound in his neck.**

AMMAN- Members of an al Qaeda-linked Islamist group in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo executed a 15-year-old boy in front of his parents on Sunday as punishment for what the group regarded as a heretical comment, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Mohammad Qataa was shot in the face and neck a day after being seized, said the pro-opposition monitoring group, which is based in Britain and uses a network of observers across Syria.

A photo released by the Observatory showed Qataa's face with his mouth and jaw bloodied and destroyed, as well as a bullet wound in his neck.

The Observatory, which based its report on witness accounts of the killing, said Qataa, who was a street vendor selling coffee in the working-class Shaar neighbourhood, had been arguing with someone when he was overheard saying: "Even if the Prophet Mohammad comes down (from heaven), I will not become a believer.

The gunmen, who belong to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a militant group that started off known as the Nusra Front, took Qatta on Saturday and brought him back alive in the early hours of Sunday to his wooden stand, with whiplash marks visible on his body.

"People gathered around him and a member of the fighting brigade said: 'Generous citizens of Aleppo, disbelieving in God is polytheism and cursing the prophet is a polytheism. Whoever curses even once will be punished like this.'"

"He then fired two bullets from an automatic rifle in view of the crowd and in front of the boy's mother and father, and got into a car and left," the report said.

Abdulrahman said the boy's mother had pleaded with the killers, whose Arabic suggested they might not be Syrian, not to shoot her son. Qataa's parents said the youth had taken part in pro-democracy demonstrations in Aleppo.

Since last year, large parts of the city have fallen under the control of Islamist brigades, including the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, as well as other rebel units.

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Islamists-Kill-15-year-old-Syrian-boy-for-heresy-315990>

#### **U.S. considers taking in Syrian refugees**

WASHINGTON — Two years into a civil war that shows no signs of ending, the Obama administration is considering resettling refugees who have fled Syria, part of an international effort that could bring thousands of Syrians to American cities and towns.

A resettlement plan under discussion in Washington and other capitals is aimed at relieving pressure on Middle Eastern countries straining to support 1.6 million refugees, as well as assisting hard-hit Syrian families.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2013/jun/09/world/la-fg-syria-refugees-20130610>

#### **White House reassesses arming Syria rebels**

US President Barack Obama is to take meetings throughout the coming days in which he is expected to consider sending lethal arms directly to fighters in opposition to Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. Government forces have turned the tide in recent days with aggressive assaults on increasingly fractured rebel groups.

Assad's reclamation of Qusair – a city valued for its position on the supply route between the Assad-loyalist West and the heartland of the country and the city of Homs – represents a significant moment in the conflict that reminds some in Washington of the moments before forces of Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi were preparing to descend on rebel-held Benghazi during their 2011 civil war.

The fear of a definitive rebel defeat in Libya – and of a massacre of civilians – prompted an emergency Security Council meeting at the United Nations, providing legal justification for the NATO-led no-fly zone over the country that followed.

Assad forces say they are aiming for Aleppo, Syria's largest city currently divided among rebel sects as well as some government loyalist groups. A "major offensive" is expected in the coming days, Syrian government officials say.

"The difference here from the Benghazi situation is that Homs is tentatively under

rebel control, but has Assad forces around it, and Aleppo is a mixed city,” says Anthony Cordesman, an expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“When you start actually drawing the map, you see what rebel-held really means, and its very sketchy.”

“At this point,” Cordesman added, “Assad has established a relatively secure corridor along the Lebanese border, now reinforced with Qusair.”

Before this week’s battles, rebels had held much of northern Syrian territory for over a year.

Senator John McCain (R-Arizona), who recently traveled to Syria to meet with rebel leaders, tweeted on Monday that the Obama administration is “fiddling while Syria burns,” as over 5,000 Hezbollah fighters flooded into Syria to surround Aleppo.

The Obama administration has already sent non-lethal aid to opposition forces. But that aid has taken weeks to mobilize, and will take weeks more to arrive, Washington officials acknowledge. With an increasing sense of urgency, the question becomes whether time is on the side of those the United States has already, in one way or another, invested in supporting.

“You can fly in arms in a hurry, if you make a determination that it’s required. But the practical problem is, if you’re going to move them, training on these weapons is required and supply routes from Turkey or Jordan must

be secured, and that’s what takes time,” says Cordesman. “It takes weeks to get anything done with these rebels in Syria.”

Jeffrey White, a defense fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, says it’s the will, not the means, that is preventing aid from reaching opposition fighters.

“Assuming the administration makes that decision, they can do that in a hurry. It’s not the back side of the moon,” says White. “Turkish intelligence knows the supply routes, and the border is porous enough.” White adds that the tide may be turning, but is not irreversible.

“The task for the regime is still pretty large, but the rebels are in trouble,” he said. “Their weaknesses were exposed in Qusair.”

<http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/White-House-reassess-policy-on-arming-Syria-rebels-316105>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

### Viber back in Saudi Arabia: Report

Dubai: Saudi news site Sabq on Monday said that Viber, the popular internet messenger application, was back in Saudi Arabia days after it was suspended.

Citing technical sources, the site said that users were able to send and receive calls and messages.

However, Saudis contacted by phone could not confirm the report.

The report did not specify whether the application company complied with the requirements imposed by Saudi Arabia or if it found “other ways”.

Saudi authorities last week banned Viber for allegedly failing to comply with the country’s regulations.

Reacting to the ban, Talmon Marco, Viber’s founder and chief executive, said the company hoped to find a solution to restore operations within weeks.

Viber is hugely popular among the millions of expatriates living in the country and among the thousands of Saudis studying abroad and their families.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/viber-back-in-saudi-arabia-report-1.1195216>

### **Indonesian woman dies in Jeddah protest fire Thousands converged seeking to resolve their immigration status**

Jeddah: An Indonesian woman died on Sunday in a fire lit by workers outside her country’s consulate in western Saudi Arabia, where thousands converged seeking to resolve their immigration status, a consular source said.

Some 8,000 Indonesians gathered outside the consulate in Jeddah trying to sort out their papers as illegal foreign workers in the kingdom face a deadline to regularise their position or leave.

“Some of them lit a fire near the walls of the consulate seeking to enter by force but leading to the death of a woman,” the source said.

Before the fire, rocks and stones were thrown at the consulate by the Indonesian workers frustrated by long waits to get their cases dealt with.

The action was “limited to the walls of the compound and did not touch the offices”, said the consular source.

Police confirmed only that a fire had left some people injured, without mentioning any fatality.

“The fire has been brought under control,” a police source said.

Some 180,000 illegal foreign workers have left Saudi Arabia since April 1 under an amnesty that allows them to try to sort out their papers or leave without paying a penalty, a newspaper report said on Sunday.

This wave brings to 380,000 the number of foreign workers who have left Saudi Arabia since the beginning of the year.

Workers without proper papers are becoming increasingly concerned as violators of the immigration rules in the oil-rich kingdom will face penalties when the amnesty period ends on July 3, with punishment including imprisonment up to two years, and fines up to 100,000 riyals (Dh97,897).

According to official statistics, eight million expatriates work in the kingdom. Economists say there are another two million unregistered foreign workers.

Saudi Arabia is aiming to create job opportunities for its own unemployed by cutting the number of foreign workers, although many of those are in low-paid jobs that Saudis would not accept.

The world’s largest oil exporter is a gold mine for millions of people from poor Asian and Arab countries that are reeling under high levels of unemployment.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/indonesian-woman-dies-in-jeddah-protest-fire-1.1195243>

### **Qatar is preparing to begin a leadership**

London: Qatar is preparing to begin a leadership transition this summer in which the emir will relinquish power to his son, and his cousin, the owner of Harrods, will step down as prime minister.

Senior figures in Qatar have briefed foreign counterparts that the time has come for Shaikh Tamim Bin Hamad, the 33-year-old crown prince, to take over the leadership of the Gulf state, The Daily Telegraph has learnt. Shaikh Hamad Bin Jasem, the prime minister and one of the biggest investors in Britain, will give up his post. The royal court will then announce that the 61-year-old emir, Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, who has struggled with health problems, will cede powers to the Sandhurst-educated crown prince.

A British source close to the Gulf state was told of the plans earlier this year. Sources said other key states, including the US and Iran, have also been briefed about the succession.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/emir-of-qatar-to-cede-powers-to-33-year-old-son-1.1194986>

## **8. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN**

Taliban attacks in Kabul in Afghanistan show that nothing has changed

Today, the Afghan capital's airport was targeted. Italian troops also come under attack. The body of Giuseppe Rosa, an Italian police officer killed on Saturday in Rafah, has been flown home. Islamic extremism and

nationalism are growing. Between 2002 and 2010, the United States spent more than US\$ 35 billion for the country's development, but the population has not seen a penny. The Western attempt to impose secularism and the "god of money" in a society based on religion has failed.

Kabul (AsiaNews) - The attack against Kabul airport this morning, which left seven attackers dead, is yet another blow to the 'Peace in progress' policy" trumpeted by the United States and the Karzai government. "Since 2001, Afghanistan has been a battlefield," sources, anonymous for security reasons, told AsiaNews. Since then, "Nothing has changed. 'Peace in progress' are only two empty words without meaning. [. . .] Everyone is waiting for 2014 and the complete withdrawal of foreign troops."

Local witnesses said that the exchange this morning lasted at least an hour. Explosions were heard throughout the capital.

A few hours after the attack, which occurred at 4.00 am (local time), the Taliban claimed responsibility, saying that their goal was to hit the US-controlled airport.

According to their spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, at least 44 soldiers were killed, a claim not confirmed by Kabul police Chief General Salangi, who announced instead the death of seven Taliban, five killed by Afghan troops and two who blew themselves up.

In two weeks, this is the second Taliban attack in the capital. The previous one took place on

27 May in central Kabul and cost the lives of four people with dozens wounded. One of the latter was Barbara de Anna, an Italian official with the International Organisation for Migration, currently in a German hospital with serious burns.

In addition to such large-scale military operations, the Taliban have carried out targeted assassinations against foreign troops. On 8 June, an Italian police officer, Captain Giuseppe La Rosa was killed in Rafah by a grenade thrown by an 11-year-old boy.

On the same day, three US soldiers were killed by Afghan colleagues who turned their guns against them, firing at point blank range.

The body of the dead Italian policeman landed today at Ciampino military airport in Rome. A private funeral is scheduled for tomorrow in Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto (Messina).

In military terms, such insider attacks are a sign of growing popular resentment against occupation troops, sources told AsiaNews.

"For several years now, Afghans have had mixed feelings, resignation and anger," the sources said. "The first is due to the situation of war and instability that started with the Soviet invasion. The second stems from the political and economic impasse of recent years and the Western attempt to develop a religious society through secularism."

Between 2002 and 2010, the US government spent US\$ 35 billion for the country's development. According to the sources, "that money went into politicians' pockets. Not a

penny went to the people. At the human level, rather than talking with people the military has flaunted its secularism in a country where man is not conceivable without God." This has generated a strong nationalism on the one hand, and a return to Islam on the other.

"Many young people have begun to consider Islam as a solution to their problems. The fear is that the god of money imposed by the West may turn people away from God."

For the sources, the situation will last until foreign nations occupying Afghanistan will focus only security and the fight against terrorism as the only way to promote the good of the population.

"The Afghans want peace, but they unfortunately are losing hope," they said.

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Taliban-attacks-in-Kabul-in-Afghanistan-show-that-nothing-has-changed-28161.html>

### **Militants attack NATO trucks in Pakistan**

PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN — Militants dressed as policemen and armed with assault rifles and rockets attacked a NATO convoy in Pakistan carrying supplies Monday for the U.S.-led coalition in neighboring Afghanistan, killing four people, officials said.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack but for years, NATO supply trucks have been targeted by Pakistani Taliban and other militants.

Although the U.S. has over the years reduced its reliance on Pakistani routes to ferry

materials to its troops across the border, the routes that run through Pakistan are still crucial to the war effort.

In Monday's attack, the militants emerged from the mountains and lobbed rockets at the NATO trucks, setting fire and completely burning two vehicles, said local official Iqbal Khan.

The militants wore local police uniforms, and the four dead included truck drivers and their assistants, he said.

The attack took place in the Jamrud area of the Khyber tribal region, through which runs the main route into Afghanistan for the supply trucks. The trucks' journey often begins from the southern port city of Karachi.

Government official Jehangir Azam told DunyaNews TV that around 15 heavily armed militants were involved.

"It was a very organized attack," he said, adding that the trucks carried a NATO jeep, an ambulance and other materials. U.S.-led coalition forces say they only transport nonlethal supplies overland through Pakistan.

TV footage from the scene showed the vehicles engulfed in flames.

The route through Khyber is one of two entry points into Afghanistan used by the Americans, and it's also a key entry point for regular trade with Afghanistan. Militant attacks on the supply line have frustrated NATO.

Pakistan has at times closed the route to vent its anger over NATO actions, including airstrikes that have killed Pakistani soldiers.

As a result, the U.S. has increased its use of more costly routes through Central Asia to get supplies into Afghanistan. However, even as foreign troops withdraw from Afghanistan over the next year and a half, the routes across Pakistan will still be crucially important.

<http://www.navytimes.com/article/20130610/NEWS08/306100015/Militants-attack-NATO-trucks-Pakistan-kill-4>