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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ
ÖZGÜR DÜŞÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

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15May 2013

NO: 1601

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1. IRAQ

-Kurdish official: We understand the federal government's position toward the issue of the PKK. but provincial peace has the priority.

Baghdad/ NINA /-- The head of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Kurdistan Regional Government Falah Mustafa, confirmed in a press statement today the absence of an agreement between his government and the PKK , to deploy the PKK forces in a specific area of Kurdistan region, but he stressed that the peace process that began in Turkey is of interest to Kurdistan provincial government , as it will contribute to support the security and stability of the region.

The Turkish government has recently reached an agreement with the Kurdistan Workers'

-Sinead: Turkey bypasses the concept of good neighborliness and adopts deliberate provocation.

Baghdad/ NINA /-- Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Security and Defense MP, Hassan Sinead said in a statement to NINA that Turkey, bypassed the concept of good neighborliness , moreover adopted a policy of deliberated provocation, as commenting on the arrival of the PKK guerrillas from Turkish territory to Kurdistan according to a controversial agreement between Ardoghan and Ogalan, stressed that the recent positions of Turkey , could drag the two countries to a confrontation.

Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ojalan to end the armed conflict with the Turkish government, providing to cleared the PKK fighters whereabouts in Turkey and withdraw to Mount Qandil in northern Iraq.

It is noteworthy to mention in this context that the first batch of the PKK guerrillas have stationed in Iraqi Kurdistan region yesterday, the second batch is expected to arrive later today.

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

He called on the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Nouri al-Maliki and Defense Minister by interim Saadoun al-Dulaimi as well as military leaders to: " take bold decisions about the situation on the border with Turkey." He also called on Kurdistan Regional Government and the leadership of the Peshmerga forces to continuous coordination with the Iraqi land forces command to save the sovereignty of Iraq.

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

Zebari receives a message from his Kuwaiti

Baghdad/ NINA /--Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, received a written message from his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs concerning the bilateral relations.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement : "Zebari met today in his office Kuwaiti Ambassador in Iraq Ali al-Moamin who handed over a message the message from al-Sabah , noting that the constructive and positive cooperation by both parties and by help of the UN to fulfill Iraq's international obligations and protect the rights and interests of the two countries to get rid completely of the provisions of Chapter VII.

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

Shaways, Austin review situation in the area, security challenges

Baghdad (NINA) – Deputy Prime Minister, Rowsch Shaways, stressed the importance to develop relations, especially the military, between Iraq and the United States.

Shaways stressed during his meeting with the visiting Commander of US Central Forces, General Lloyd Austin, the importance of developing bilateral relations in the benefit of both countries, especially the military, armament and security to combat international terrorism.

A statement issued by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office said that in the meeting, the two reviewed the situation in the area and security challenges.

US Ambassador to Iraq, Robert Beecroft, attended the meeting.

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

Nijaifi holds government responsible for security deterioration in Iraq

Baghdad (AIN) -The Iraqi Parliament Speaker, Osama al-Nijaifi held the Iraqi government responsibility for the deterioration in the security situation, calling not to overlook the security forces' bad performance.

Nijaifi's office stated that "The parliament Speaker expressed his worries over the continuity of the security deterioration across the country and the security forces' disability to provide security for the people after the surge of the assassinations, murders and bombings in Baghdad and the provinces."

The statement quoted Nijaifi as saying "the growing security backwardness all over the country without being confronted by any concrete measures indicates the clear weakness of the security forces and its failure to address the successive security breaches."

2. IRAN

Minister: Intelligence Ministry Ready to Foil Enemies' Plots in Election Time

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi stressed that his ministry is completely ready to confront enemy plots during the June presidential election.

"They (the enemies) have hatched plots for the election but all of them will be foiled," Moslehi told reporters in Tehran on Wednesday, stressing that all of his ministry forces "are ready to confront these movements".

Asked about the nature of the enemies' plots against Iran in election time, he said, "Most of these plots are hatched by the media."

In relevant remarks in February, Moslehi said his forces are having a close watch on possible seditionist moves during the upcoming presidential election due to be held in Iran on June 14.

Asked about the intelligence ministry's measures to monitor possible seditionist moves in the presidential election, Moslehi told reporters on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting here in Tehran, "Yes, the intelligence ministry is conducting heavy monitoring in this regards."

Iranian officials on many occasions have warned that enemies are trying to hatch plots to create a chaotic atmosphere in the upcoming presidential election in Iran.

In January, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei warned that enemies have hatched plots to

hinder mass-participation of the Iranian nation in the upcoming presidential election, describing it as the "tangible" goal of the enemies.

Also in December, the interior ministry said that it has a close watch on all activities related to the upcoming presidential election throughout the country.

"We are monitoring (election) activities in all provinces and it is our routine mission," Deputy Interior Minister for Security and Law Enforcement Affairs Ali Abdollahi told FNA at the time.

"No security problem has so far been reported to us regarding the 2013 presidential election," he noted.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9202241200>

Iran hopes Jalili's talks with Ashton will be constructive

"We hope that the response that Ms. Ashton will provide at a bilateral meeting with Mr. Jalili tomorrow will be constructive, and we are waiting to hear her response," Iran's new Foreign Ministry spokesman, Abbas Araghchi, said at his first press briefing in Tehran on Tuesday.

He was referring to the meeting that the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Saeed Jalili, is scheduled to hold with European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton in Istanbul today to discuss Iran's nuclear program, which the West suspects may be aimed at developing nuclear weapons capability but Iran insists is purely for peaceful purposes.

Ashton leads diplomatic efforts to resolve the decade-old nuclear dispute on behalf of the six major powers, namely the United States, China, Russia, Britain, France, and Germany, which are known as the P5+1 group.

The most recent round of high-level talks between Iran and the P5+1 group, which failed to produce a breakthrough, was held in the Kazakh city of Almaty on April 5 and 6.

They held similar negotiations in the same city on February 26 and 27.

According to the New York Times, in February talks, the major powers dropped their demand that Iran shut down its underground uranium-enrichment plant at Fordo, where it enriches uranium to 20 percent, and insisted instead that Iran suspend enrichment work there and agree to unspecified conditions that would make it hard to quickly resume production. They also said that Iran could continue to keep a small amount of uranium enriched to 20 percent for use in a research reactor that produces medical isotopes.

If Tehran agreed to these steps, the major powers said they would suspend some sanctions against Iran, including trade in gold and petrochemicals, and would not impose new sanctions through the United Nations Security Council and the European Union. The main oil and financial sanctions would not be loosened.

Iran's main demand is that its right to uranium enrichment, as stipulated in the NPT, be recognized.

At the end of the talks in April, Ashton told reporters, "The two sides remain far apart on substance." "What matters in the end is substance, and... we are still a considerable distance apart."

She added, "We therefore agreed all sides will go back to their capitals to evaluate on the process."

Iran ready to cooperate with IAEA

Araghchi was also asked to comment on the remarks that International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Yukiya Amano made on May 11, in which he, according to Reuters, said that it would be a good idea to send experts to check the safety of Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor, a day after Iran said its facilities were safe following a nearby earthquake.

The Iranian spokesman said that Iran had signed safeguards agreements with the IAEA and was ready to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog within the framework of those agreements.

U.S. absence in UN meeting chaired by Iran not important

In addition, Araghchi commented on the fact that the United States said on Monday that it would refuse to send its ambassador to a UN meeting on disarmament in Geneva, which will be led by Iranian Ambassador to the UN, Seyyed Mohammad Sajjadi, from May 27 to June 23.

He said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran's mission in Geneva has a strong and effective presence in regard to all issues related to nuclear disarmament and arms control in the world,

and we have an active participation in all initiatives, and all countries acknowledge that Iran's presence in conferences on disarmament and arms control and conferences related to world peace and security has been an effective and strong presence."

"We will continue our presence as the chair of conferences wherever necessary, and the pressure exerted by others and their absence will not be important for us," Araghchi added.

Araghchi hopes diplomat's arrest was due to misunderstanding

On the arrest in March of Baqer Asadi, a former diplomat at Iran's UN mission in New York, in Tehran, Araghchi said, "We are waiting for the announcement of the final result by security officials, and, at the same time, we definitely defend the rights of our colleague so that he would be subject to due process during security and judicial investigations."

He also expressed hope that the arrest was due to a "misunderstanding".

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1821840>

Iran waiting for P5+1 'clear response'

TEHRAN, May 15 (MNA) – Iran's Secretary of Supreme National Security Council says Iran is waiting for P5+1 clear response to Iran's proposals.

Saeed Jalili told reporters in Istanbul Airport when arriving at Turkey that Iran had presented 'balanced' proposals in Almaty 2

round of talks, and that "P5+1 asked for a 4-day opportunity to response to our proposals."

"We believe that this opportunity has been long," Jalili said. "I believe we should not have pre-judgment and wait for their response," added he.

In answering to a question whether presidential elections would impact the negotiations, Jalili said that "the nuclear issue is an issue beyond the party lines needing national consensus."

New round of talks between Iran and IAEA will be held on Wednesday (today) in Islamic Republic of Iran's permanent representative in Vienna, Austria.

Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh, Iran's representative to IAEA and Herman Nackaerts Deputy Director General, International Atomic Energy Agency, will head negotiation sides.

Iran-IAEA negotiations will be held behind closed doors at 10 local time, 12:30 Iranian time.

3. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

Security forces on high alert for Nakba Day IDF focused on West Bank, amid fears of disturbances and rock-hurling at Israeli cars.

NAKBA DAYNAKBA1948

The IDF and Israel Police upped their alert level of readiness for Palestinian Nakba Day, or “day of catastrophe,” on Wednesday, the same day as the Jewish holiday of Shavuot.

Security forces were deployed across the country and in the West Bank where there were fears of local disturbances and concerns about Palestinian youths hurling rocks at Israeli cars.

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The IDF was also braced for demonstrations in Palestinian villages, and instructed forces to increase their patrols on the main roads in the territories, especially those near settlements.

In Jerusalem, Israel Police officers were joined by Border Police guards in an effort to boost general security.

In honor of Nakba Day, Palestinian TV aired remarks by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, who said that “the Palestinian people will not agree to any plan that harms the right of the Palestinian people to establish a free, sovereign state along the 1967 borders.”

Nakba Day, associated with the establishment of the state of Israel and the price paid by Palestinians, is memorialized internationally on May 15, one day after Israel’s

Independence Day in 1948, according to the Gregorian calendar.

Two years ago, Israel witnessed an unprecedented number of disturbances across the country and on its borders with Syria and Lebanon. Some 15 people were killed in clashes when protesters, mainly from Palestinian refugee camps in these countries, organized mass marches and tried to storm the borders. In the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights village of Majdal Shams, several dozen Syrian protesters managed to reach the village before being sent back by security forces. One Syrian man even made it all the way to Jaffa before turning himself in to police.

In Tel Aviv that same year, one man was killed and over a dozen injured when an Arab driver from the village of Kfar Kassem went on a rampage of about two kilometers, ramming his truck into vehicles in his path, in what police called a terror attack. The man was tried, convicted, and sent to life imprisonment.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/security-forces-on-high-alert-ahead-of-nakba-day/>

Israel has highest poverty rate in OECD

Country also plagued by wide income inequality gulf between rich and poor, new data shows, underlining imperative ‘to protect the most vulnerable.

A man searches the trash in a garbage container in the center of Jerusalem.

OECD ISRAEL DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Israel has a poverty rate of 21 percent, the highest among all OECD countries, a report by

the economic development organization revealed Wednesday.

The report, aimed at investigating the impact of the global financial crisis on developing countries, also found that the gap between the rich and the poor was very high in Israel, with only Chile, Turkey, Mexico and the United States exhibiting a higher gap.

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Iceland, Slovenia, Norway and Denmark were found to have the lowest rate of income inequality among the 34 OECD member countries. Israel joined the OECD in 2010.

“These worrying findings underline the need to protect the most vulnerable in society, especially as governments pursue the necessary task of bringing public spending under control,” said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría in response to the findings.

“Policies to boost jobs and growth must be designed to ensure fairness, efficiency and inclusiveness. Among these policies, reforming tax systems is essential to ensure that everyone pays their fair share and also benefits and receives the support they need.”

However, Israel was found to have had a low increase in child poverty since 2007 compared to other OECD states, such as Turkey, Spain, Belgium, Slovenia and Hungary.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-has-highest-poverty-rate-in-oecd-data-shows/>

Israel 'will bring down Assad' if he retaliates for future airstrikes.

Jerusalem conveys unprecedented threat to Syrian president, unnamed officials say; Israeli source tells NY Times further raids contemplated on weapons shipments.

Israel has warned Damascus that if President Assad chooses to hit back at Israel for any further Israeli military strikes, Israel will bring down his regime.

An Israeli official confirmed Wednesday night that a dramatic and unprecedented message to this effect had been conveyed to Damascus, Channel 2 news reported.

he report said that Israel's position to this effect also came up during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's emergency meeting in Russia on Tuesday with President Vladimir Putin, during which Netanyahu also told Putin of Israel's profound opposition to Russia's sale of sophisticated S-300 missile defense batteries to Assad.

The warning came hours after mortar shells hit the Mount Hermon area for the first time in the two-year Syrian civil war, and as Arabic newspapers reported talk of Hezbollah opening “a new front” against Israel on the Golan Heights.

Syria vowed last week to respond “immediately and harshly” to any further Israeli airstrikes, after Israel carried out two early morning attacks earlier this month on weapons consignments being stored in and around Damascus en route from Iran to Hezbollah in Lebanon. The shipments contained highly sophisticated Fateh-110 missiles.

Syrian President Bashar Assad speaks to Turkish TV station Ulusal Kanal on April 2, 2013. (photo credit: image capture from YouTube video uploaded by SyrianPresidency)

Confirmation of Israel's warning to Assad came soon after the New York Times quoted an Israeli official issuing the same threat. The New York Times said Israel was "considering further military strikes on Syria to stop the transfer of advanced weapons to Islamic militants," and that an unnamed Israeli official had contacted the paper to warn: "Israel is determined to continue to prevent the transfer of advanced weapons to Hezbollah. The transfer of such weapons to Hezbollah will destabilize and endanger the entire region. If Syrian President Assad reacts by attacking Israel, or tries to strike Israel through his terrorist proxies, he will risk forfeiting his regime, for Israel will retaliate."

The New York Times report speculated that Israel "could be trying to restrain Syria's behavior without undertaking further military action, or alerting the international community to another strike. That would ratchet up the tension in an already fraught situation in Syria, where a civil war has been raging for more than two years."

Channel 2 on Wednesday night showed satellite images of what it said was a surgical strike, reportedly carried out by Israel at Damascus airport to target the Iranian missile consignments. It showed before and after pictures of specific buildings that had been blown up, while neighboring buildings remained intact. Israel has not formally confirmed either of this month's attacks.

Channel 2 also said that some in the Israeli security establishment were assessing that the unprecedented firing of mortar shells into the Mount Hermon area from across the Syrian border earlier Wednesday may have been deliberate, rather than a case of fallout from fighting between Assad's forces and Syrian rebels.

Also Tuesday, several Arabic media sources reported that Syria was prepared to give Hezbollah leeway to open a "new front" against Israel in the Golan Heights. Iran, a report in the Palestinian Al-Quds daily said, had persuaded Assad "to open the door to jihad" in the Golan Heights in an effort enable Arab and Muslim fighters to unite and confront Israel, so that they're "ready" if Israel strikes Syria again.

In the comments quoted by the New York Times, the Israeli official said "Israel has so far refrained from intervening in Syria's civil war and will maintain this policy as long as Assad refrains from attacking Israel directly or indirectly."

"Israel will continue its policy of interdicting attempts to strengthen Hezbollah, but will not intercede in the Syrian civil war as long as Assad desists from direct or indirect attacks against Israel."

Channel 2 said Netanyahu had made clear to Putin — as he also had in recent conversations with US President Barack Obama and the Chinese leadership — that Israel would hold to its "red lines" as related to Syria, which included preventing the transfer of sophisticated weaponry to Hezbollah and other rogue organizations.

Netanyahu, who sought the meeting in part to persuade Putin not to sell advanced S-300 missile defense systems to Assad, told the Russian president that the S-300 was not a weapon of relevance to civil war, but was rather a system that, if acquired by Syria, “is likely to draw us into a response, and could send the region deteriorating into war,” Channel 2 reported.

Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon reiterated Israel’s red lines publicly last Tuesday: “Whether it is the transfer of high-quality weapons to terrorist organizations or violation of our sovereignty across the border, in all these cases we will strive to protect the security of the State of Israel,” he said.

4. AFRICA and EGYPT

Salafists Protest Potential Ban of Ansar al-Sharia Meeting

A gathering of the Salafist organization Ansar al-Sharia scheduled to take place in Kairouan on Sunday has become a focus of controversy amid speculation that it could be banned by the government.

The group has yet to obtain a legal license for the event, an annual meeting that tens of thousands are expected to attend. Clashes between Ansar al-Sharia followers and the police over the weekend spread speculation that the meeting might be prohibited by the government.

Ennahdha leader Rached Ghannouchi stated at a press conference today that the Ansar al-Sharia meeting will not happen without permission from the Ministry of the Interior, which had been obtained for the last two meetings, according to Ennahdha’s Facebook

page. Ghannouchi additionally warned the group not to enter into a conflict with the government.

Some self-described Salafists protested Ghannouchi’s statements on the Internet.

On “Sheikhs of Salafists,” a Facebook page that has over 50,000 fans, both the page administrators and Internet users expressed surprise and dissatisfaction over the potential ban of the meeting.

The page posted today that several groups of Salafists from around Tunisia were prevented from renting buses to travel to Kairouan on Sunday. It also stated that in case roads to Kairouan and the al-Okba mosque are blocked, the meeting’s attendees ought to march there.

French press agency AFP reported that Ghannouchi announced a government ban on Ansar al-Sharia’s meeting because the group does not have a license. This statement has not been confirmed by Ennahdha.

Attempts to reach the Ministry of the Interior for a response were unsuccessful.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/05/15>

Deadlock over Controversial Group Delays National Dialogue Agreement

The failure of political parties to reach an agreement regarding the Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution (LPR) brought National Dialogue discussions to a halt on Tuesday.

The LPR has been accused by unions and opposition political parties of causing violence during protests, assaulting their members and attacking their headquarters.

The National Dialogue brings together a group of ruling and opposition political parties to discuss the draft constitution and the details of the new Tunisian state.

The first stage of the National Dialogue process is set to end with a written agreement between the parties. Discussions resumed Wednesday and the second stage is scheduled to begin on Thursday.

While Ennahdha has supported the LPR, opposition parties have called for its dissolution, according to Mohamed Hamdi, a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) member affiliated with the Democratic Bloc.

The Leagues have existed legally since June 14, 2012, said LPR spokesperson Nasreddine Wazfa. Some local committees that were formed spontaneously after the revolution and without permission are now legally a part of the LPR. Others felt that it was not necessary for them to gain legal recognition, Wazfa said, feeling "their revolutionary legitimacy" was sufficient in itself.

But Wazfa added that the Leagues are only officially responsible for those members whose names are registered at the Prime Ministry. He protested the accusations directed against the LPR and the fact that its dissolution had become a political matter.

"We were created based on law, and only a court of law can dissolve us," he said. "Political parties, Ennahdha or otherwise, cannot decide such things."

The situation of the Leagues "is chaotic; some of them have permission, others don't," Hamdi said. "And we're mainly against the violence they've been using, which is against the Associations Law." This law regulates the formation and permitted activities of registered associations.

Hamdi asserted that Ennahdha did not provide any solutions and that it denied accusations of violence directed at the LPR.

In an interview with Tunisia Live, Zoubaier Chehoudi, a member of Ennahdha's Shura Council, the body that determines the party's policy positions, said that it has not officially decided its final stance on the LPR. He added that negotiations within the party are ongoing and expressed concerns about instituting special conditions for the LPR that would not apply to other groups.

"It is a big question mark to us, to address the Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution during the National Dialogue as different from the hundreds of other associations that exist in the country," Wazfa said.

<http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/05/15>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON

EU urges Lebanon to do more for itself on Syria crisis

EU ambassador to Lebanon Angelina Eichhorst speaks during an interview with The Daily Star in Beirut, Monday, Feb. 11, 2013. (The Daily Star/Mohammad Azakir)

BEIRUT: European Union Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst said Tuesday that the war in Syria and its fallout were key concerns for both Europe and Lebanon, but appeared to suggest the latter could do more for itself rather than relying on the support of the EU in confronting the crisis.

“I think it is very important we all have our sense of responsibility,” she told guests at a luncheon hosted by the Hariri family to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the EU.

“The European Union has been consistent and we have lived up to our promises in helping you so far in the crisis, but all resources are limited and we have to make sure that the situation does not get worse,” she added.

Eichhorst said the Syrian crisis had already surpassed both the Balkan wars and the war in Iraq in terms of the number of displaced people and the burden placed on neighboring countries like Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

She also said she would like to see Europe taking a more active role in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and easing tensions with Iran, but that Syrian crisis is “priority No. 1.”

She exhorted the Lebanese to “get a government together, to take the decisions, give the directives, to avoid what could possibly happen.”

MP Bahia Hariri played hostess at the luncheon, which was held at former Prime Minister Saad Hariri’s Downtown residence and attended by a number of prominent Lebanese and European figures. The lawmaker struck a slightly more positive note, noting the Hariri Foundation’s long history of fostering

cultural and academic exchange between Europe and Lebanon.

Hariri told guests that Europe’s postwar renaissance was one of the inspirations for the late Prime Minister Rafik Hariri’s vision.

“This great renaissance of the European people, construction and economies has made Europe a remarkable achiever capable of confronting different crises, wars, destructions and hostilities,” she said. “All of this constituted the main drive behind the dream of [the late Rafik] Hariri, his confidence in his nation, its people and their capacity for overcoming crises, wars and destruction, and ultimately building their nation and future.”

She noted that the Hariri Foundation had sent thousands of Lebanese students to 771 European universities in 12 European countries, invoking her late brother’s dedication to education and calling for deeper partnerships with European nations.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb>

ZAATARI, Jordan — KILIAN KLEINSCHMIDT had a problem.

The afternoon before Kuwait’s ambassador to Jordan was scheduled to visit the overcrowded Syrian refugee camp here, children vandalized mobile homes that Kuwait had donated, stealing windows, doors and floor mats.

Lynsey Addario for The New York Times

“I decide everything. Whether to fix a fence or throw out a refugee — everything.” KILIAN KLEINSCHMIDT

Mr. Kleinschmidt, who runs the Zaatari camp for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, called the police, but they were busy with a riot as thousands of Syrians tried to cram onto a handful of buses headed back to their embattled homeland.

“Naughty, naughty kids — the best stone throwers on earth,” said Mr. Kleinschmidt, 50, a ruddy-faced German whose résumé reads like a Wikipedia entry for the last few decades of international disasters. “I don’t know what I’m going to tell the ambassador of Kuwait tomorrow. He is going to be very upset. He wants to see these placed and happy families moving in there.”

About half the size of a small Manhattan studio apartment, the 161-square-foot and 194-square-foot trailers — called caravans and costing \$2,500 to \$3,500 each — are the most coveted commodity in Zaatari, separating the have-littles from the have-lesses.

Moving families from tents to caravans is the cornerstone of Mr. Kleinschmidt’s plan to overhaul Zaatari, where he took the reins on March 12 after a series of temporary directors. By July, he promises, all of the more than 100,000 refugees sprawled across Zaatari’s five square miles will be in caravans, more than 25,000 of them. They are less than halfway there.

Mr. Kleinschmidt also wants to divide the chaotic camp into 12 neighborhoods, put up street signs and assign everyone an address. He envisions issuing business licenses in the vast, unregulated marketplace of corrugated tin stalls. He wants to install water and electric meters, too. And, eventually, he hopes for a biometric identification system and debit

cards to cover food, health care and other services — like the system he oversaw for more than one million displaced people in Pakistan.

But first: a secure fence — better yet, a wall — around the aid workers’ compound, and Zaatari itself.

“Fences don’t work,” he told a representative from the European Union the day after the caravans had been looted. “One message to the E.U. is, recruitment program for an East German wall specialist. I want to build a wall. I like walls.”

The son of teachers, Mr. Kleinschmidt grew up in Berlin and worked as a roofer, then joined a cooperative that raised 35 goats to make cheese in the Pyrenees. At 26, on a motorbike trip to Mali, he met an aid worker in a bar and ended up helping to build a school near Timbuktu.

He has been working for United Nations aid agencies pretty much ever since. He helped organize a camp for the so-called Lost Boys of Sudan; was in Mogadishu in 1993 during the military operation in which 18 Americans were killed and which inspired the book and movie “Black Hawk Down”; spent two years as a sort of liaison to the Tamil Tiger rebels in Sri Lanka; coordinated one of the largest humanitarian airlifts in history for Rwandans caught in the rain forest in Congo; and, in between, worked in Kosovo, Kenya and Uganda. His nickname in aid circles is “the Lion in the Desert.”

“What makes Kilian tick is the same thing that makes him difficult,” said Pilar Robledo, who worked closely with Mr. Kleinschmidt for four years in Pakistan and now serves as a

consultant to a project here run by the United States Agency for International Development. "He is a man who thrives when mired in chaos, and seems like a different person when an emergency situation has normalized."

Mr. Kleinschmidt has five children, one stepson and a 6-month-old grandson, from four relationships. His wife, a jewelry designer, is from the Caucasus and lives in Nairobi; they have not seen each other in two months.

In Jordan, Mr. Kleinschmidt's official title is senior field coordinator, with a salary of \$14,000 a month. But he calls himself "the International Mayor of Zaatari" or, simply, the boss.

6. SYRIA

The U.N. General Assembly is set to vote on Wednesday on a draft resolution that condemns Syrian authorities and accepts the opposition Syrian National Coalition as party to a potential political transition.

Russia, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, is opposed to the resolution, which was drafted by Qatar and other Arab nations and circulated among the 193 U.N. member states. Some Western diplomats said it was unlikely to win as many votes as a resolution that passed last year with 133 in favor.

No country has a veto in the General Assembly.

"I'm convinced a lot of countries voted for this text because they believed they were voting for the winning side," a senior western U.N. diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said in reference to the August, 2012 resolution. "They are not so sure anymore."

"Now also you have the Islamist, terrorist factor which is much more conspicuous," he said.

The Syrian conflict started more than two years ago with mainly peaceful demonstrations against Assad, but turned into a civil war in which the United Nations says at least 70,000 people have been killed. Islamist militants have emerged as the most potent of the anti-Assad rebels.

Wednesday's vote comes as Washington and European governments have been mulling the benefits and risks of supplying arms to Syrian rebels.

Another senior U.N. diplomat, who also spoke on condition of anonymity, said this draft resolution was stronger than the earlier resolution, prompting Russia to write to all states to complain that it was unbalanced. The diplomat said Russia had also warned that it could hinder preparations for a Syria peace conference, as agreed by Russia and the United States.

A dispute between Russia and the United States over how to end Syria's war has left the U.N. Security Council paralyzed to act. They both agreed last week to convene a peace conference on Syria, but that plan already appears to be hitting snags over who should represent the opposition.

The current draft U.N. resolution welcomes the establishment of the Syrian National Coalition "as effective representative interlocutors needed for a political transition."

CHEMICAL WEAPONS PROBE

But diplomats said some countries may be concerned that the draft resolution could be considered as official U.N. recognition of the coalition as the representative of the Syrian people.

"It's very likely the vote will not be as high as last year," said another senior western U.N. diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But we clearly don't want the numbers to go below 100 or 110."

The Syrian National Coalition has been recognized by the 130 international representatives comprising the "Friends of Syria" group of nations and the Arab League as "the legitimate representative of the Syrian people."

The draft resolution condemns "all violence, irrespective of where it comes from," continued escalation in the use of heavy weapons by Syrian authorities, the shelling and shooting by Syrian troops into neighboring nations and human rights abuses.

It also demands that the Syrian authorities grant unfettered access to a U.N. team investigating allegations that chemical weapons have been used in the conflict. The Syrian government and the opposition have accused each other of carrying out chemical weapons attacks. Both deny the accusations.

The draft resolution further welcomes Arab League decisions relevant to reaching a political solution, but does not reference an agreement by the league that member states have the right to provide military support to Syrians fighting Assad's troops.

In August there were 12 votes against the Syria resolution and 31 abstentions and some

countries did not participate. Russia was among those that opposed it. China, Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Cuba and other states that often criticize the West also voted against it.

The draft resolution reaffirms U.N. support for U.N.-Arab League Syria mediator Lakhdar Brahimi, who recently agreed to stay on in the role despite his frustration at the international deadlock that has prevented Security Council action to halt the conflict.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/15/us-syria-crisis>

Qatar tightens coordination on Syria arms flow

Doha/Beirut: Qatar, which has taken a lead in arming the Syrian opposition, is coordinating with the CIA and has tightened control of the arms flow to keep weapons out of the hands of Al Qaida-linked fighters, according to rebels and officials familiar with the operation.

With Britain and France discussing lifting an EU ban on arming the rebels fighting President Bashar Al Assad, western countries are concerned about making sure no arms end up in the hands of groups like Jabhat Al Nusra, which has pledged support for Al Qaida and which Washington considers a terrorist group.

Rebel fighters in Syria say that in recent months the system for distributing arms has become more centralised, with arms being delivered through opposition National Coalition's General Command, led by Selim Idriss, a general who defected to the opposition and is a favourite of Washington.

Qatar mostly sends arms to rebels operating in the north of Syria, while Saudi Arabia, another rich Gulf Arab state, sends weapons to fighters operating in the south, several rebel commanders said.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/qatar-tightens-coordination-on-syria-arms-flow-1.1183629>

However, the government responded by boycotting the parliament sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday in a show of solidarity with the two ministers who would take the stand.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-t-s-political-situation-shrouded-in-mystery-1.1183938>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

Kuwait's political situation shrouded in mystery

Manama: The mystery surrounding the political situation in Kuwait has put both the government and the parliament in a fix over developments in the country four weeks ahead of a landmark Constitutional Court ruling.

Relations between the parliament elected in December and the government appointed shortly afterwards soured on Monday ending a six-month honeymoon that had been hailed as among the most rewarding times in the country's modern history.

Five lawmakers filed two separate motions to grill the oil and interior ministers over alleged financial and administrative irregularities in their ministries. The MPs made vociferous remarks about the tough quizzing, the levels of the violations and the inability or unwillingness of the ministers to address them.

Indian foreign minister Salman Khurshid to visit Saudi Arabia

Salman Khurshid

New Delhi: India's External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid goes to Saudi Arabia from May 24-27, the first visit by an Indian foreign minister in the last five years, during which the kingdom's Nitaqat work policy, regional and international issues will be discussed.

Then external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee had visited Saudi Arabia in 2008. Khurshid's visit comes days after the trip of a high-level Indian delegation, led by Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi, to the kingdom to discuss the Nitaqat law, under which is it mandatory for local companies to hire one Saudi national for every 10 migrant workers.

Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahmad and Adviser to the Prime Minister T.K.A. Nair were also part of the delegation that met Saudi Arabian Labour Minister Adel Faqih last month to convey India's concern over the Nitaqat programme introduced earlier this year.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net>

Religious police head in social media warning

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of social media users.

Manama: Social networks and microblogs, particularly Twitter, cannot be guidelines in people's lives, the head of the Saudi Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice has said. "Those who resort to social networks and microblogs, especially Twitter, as their guides have lost their lives and their afterlife," Shaikh Abdul Lateef Al Shaikh said. "Twitter has become a platform for whoever does not have a platform," he said in the Saudi capital Riyadh, quoted by local Arabic daily Al Watan. Saudi Arabia has been pushing an integrated legal, media and social drive to confront the "deviant mindset" of extremists and arch-conservatives influenced by calls, often made online, to jihad and holy wars.

"We also need to fight ideas promoted by ignorant people who want to change the teachings of our religion. Islam is fully against any form of extremism and it has warned against the consequences of fanaticism. There are those who attempt to undermine the status of our religious scholars while our enemies have been using all means of destruction to create doubts, intellectual defects and ultimately divisions within our society," he said.

Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of social media users in the Arab world amid reports that they were favoured by young girls and women for chatting and learning about the latest social developments, arts and

fashion trends. However, the online media networks have also been used by religious groups to propagate their ideologies and to enlist support from various countries.

The official said there were "segments" who were misusing the social media to "demoralise young people and influence naive minds."

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

Kuwait court acquits two bloggers

Manama: A Kuwait court on Thursday acquitted blogger Mutlaq Al Sanad, dropping the charges levelled against him of undermining the status of the Emir.

The court also acquitted blogger Saqr Al Hashash, who faced a similar charge after tweeting remarks deemed offensive to the Emir.

However, Saqr will remain in prison awaiting another court case. He was acquitted in an earlier trial on May 3.

Kuwait authorities pledged to take legal action against bloggers and social media users who "trespassed well-established social values and traditions."

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

8. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

KABUL, Afghanistan (May 15, 2013)

An Afghan and coalition security force wounded a Taliban leader and killed two other insurgents during an operation in Qush Tepah district, Jowzjan province, yesterday. The leader has operational control over a group of fighters responsible for attacks against Afghan

and coalition forces in multiple districts throughout Jowzjan. He also engages in illegal taxation against Afghan civilians, provides training on improvised explosive device operations to his subordinates, and facilitates the movement of money, weapons and insurgent fighters in the local area. In other International Security Assistance Force news throughout Afghanistan: South Afghan National Army Special Forces, advised by coalition forces, detained eight insurgents and seized a large cache of homemade explosive during an operation in Panjwa'l district, Kandahar province yesterday. The cache consisted of 757 liters (200 gallons) of homemade explosive and several IED making materials. The detainees have been transferred to the Afghan Uniformed Police and all seized materials were destroyed on location. An Afghan Local Police quick reaction force responding to an attack on two separate ALP checkpoints killed one insurgent and wounded another in Andar district, Ghazni province, yesterday. The Afghan force engaged several insurgents, shortly after being dispatched from the District Operations Coordination Center, who were attacking the Rustam and Golo ALP checkpoints, using 82mm mortar and DSHKA fire. No Afghan Local Police were injured during this engagement. An Afghan quick reaction force killed two insurgents while responding to an attack on an ALP checkpoint in Gelan district, Ghazni province, yesterday. The QRF was dispatched after Afghan Local Police contacted the District Operation Coordination Center for assistance. Following the engagement the security force recovered two AK-47 rifles.

BAGRAM, Afghanistan (May 15, 2013) - Afghan National Security and Coalition Forces killed six insurgents, detained five suspected insurgents, discovered one weapons cache and found and safely cleared five improvised explosive devices during operations in eastern Afghanistan throughout the past 24 hours, May 14.

Ghazni Province

Afghan National Security and Coalition Forces found and safely cleared one IED during operations in the Andar District.

Afghan National Security and Coalition Forces found and safely cleared one IED during operations in the Ghazni District.

Coalition Forces found and safely cleared one IED during operations in the Khawja Omari District.

Nangarhar Province

Afghan National Security Forces found and safely cleared one IED during operations in the Bati Kot District.

Coalition Forces detained one suspected insurgent during operations in the Jalalabad District. The suspect was transferred to a base for questioning.

Nuristan Province

Afghan National Security Forces killed six insurgents during operations in the Kamdesh District.

Paktika Province

Afghan National Security and Coalition Forces detained four suspected insurgents during

operations in the Sar Hawza District. The suspects were transferred to a base for questioning.

Paktya Province

Afghan National Security Forces discovered one weapons cache during operations in the Gardez District. The cache contained four IEDs, eight mortar rounds, 24 mortar fuses and two hand grenades.

Parwan Province

Afghan National Security Forces found and safely cleared one IED during operations in the Bagram District.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/16/us-afghanistan-attack-idUSBRE94F06320130516>

U.S. soldiers killed in South Afghanistan

NATO has lowered the death toll in a roadside bombing in Afghanistan, saying three U.S. service personnel were killed instead of four, as was earlier reported.

The alliance said the soldiers were killed on May 15 in a roadside bomb in the southern province of Kandahar.

A spokesman for the provincial governor's office, Jawid Ahmad Faisal, said the soldiers were in a vehicle on patrol in Zhari district.

Several others were reported wounded in the blast. On May 12, three Georgian soldiers serving with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were killed and several injured in a combined attack by militants on their base in neighboring Helmand Province.

Bomber in Afghanistan kills 15, including six Americans

A suicide bomber in a car attacked a convoy of foreign troops in Kabul on Thursday, killing at least 15 people including six Americans, Afghan and foreign officials said, in one of the worst attacks in the Afghan capital in months.

Forty people were wounded in the blast at around 8 a.m. (0330 GMT) during the morning rush-hour. The Hezb-e-Islami insurgent group, which is allied with the Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack on the two-vehicle convoy.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said the bomber killed two of its members and four civilian contractors. It declined to give their nationalities.

But two senior officials, one Afghan and the other from ISAF, said the two ISAF soldiers and four contractors were all American.

Afghan officials said nine Afghan civilians were killed, including two children.

"Some of the dead civilians were badly burnt and cannot be recognized," Kaneshka Baktash, a spokesman for the Health Ministry, told Reuters.

Helicopters buzzed over Kabul's diplomatic area after the attack and sirens whined.

President Hamid Karzai strongly condemned the "cowardly" attack.

"Terrorists and enemies of Afghanistan's peace brutally targeted a residential area," Karzai said in a statement.

Concern about Afghanistan's prospects is growing as most foreign combat troops prepare to leave by the end of next year.

Karzai has accused neighboring Pakistan of meddling to de-stabilize his country. Analysts say Pakistan is maneuvering to limit the influence of its old rival, India, in Afghanistan.

Pakistan denies meddling and says it wants a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

BROKEN GLASS

The blast caused heavy damage to buildings in the vicinity, including 10 residences.

"We were in our home drinking tea when the we heard a blast and our windows shattered, the glass wounded all of us," Zohra, a wounded girl who only gave her first name, said from a hospital bed. Her head was wrapped in a bandage.

A Hezb-e-Islami spokesman told Reuters U.S. military advisers were the targets.

"We planned this attack for over a week," the spokesman, Haroon Zarghoun, said by telephone.

Last year, in a similar attack, the group killed seven South African and Russian pilots on their way to work in Kabul.

Hezb-e-Islami, which means Islamic Party, is a radical militant group which shares some of the anti-foreigner, anti-government aims of the Taliban. But the political wing of the group, founded by warlord and former anti-Soviet fighter Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has been in

exploratory talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai on a peace deal to end the 12-year war.

The National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan's intelligence agency, says it thwarts a large number of attacks on the capital on a weekly basis.

The last suicide bomb attack in Kabul was in March, when a man blew himself up at a Defense Ministry gate, killing nine Afghans, during a visit by U.S. Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel.

<http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/150349/u-s-soldiers-killed-in-south-afghanistan.html>

Barham Saleh downplays succession rumors

Erbil, Asharq Al-Awsat—The post of president of Iraq has sparked a new crisis in country, with elements within the government calling for the need to name a replacement for President Jalal Talabani, currently recuperating in Germany from a stroke he suffered last December.

In a statement issued earlier this week, the Public Prosecution Office demanded that the speaker of the Council of Representatives take legal measures to fill the post because of Talabani's long absence.

This would require implementing Article 72 of the Iraqi constitution, which sets a limit on the time the post can remain vacant.

Meanwhile, a Kurdish official source told Asharq Al-Awsat that arrangements are being made on various levels to settle this issue, and that the current visit by Barham Saleh, the deputy secretary-general of the Patriotic

Union of Kurdistan (PUK), to Iran is intended to do so.

These demands were sparked after the governor of Kirkuk, Dr. Najmaldin Karim, said that he would be visiting Talabani in hospital in Germany, and that he would soon announce good news to Iraqis and Kurds regarding an improvement in the health of the Iraqi president.

However, a Kurdish source who wished to remain anonymous told Asharq Al-Awsat that “even if President Talabani returns to Kurdistan in good health, he will not be able to take up his post as a president of the republic. Therefore, the circumstances are right to find a replacement.”

The source went on to say that Barham Saleh is no longer the most prominent candidate, he is the only candidate.☐

However, the PUK deputy secretary-general downplayed events. In a telephone interview, Saleh told Asharq Al-Awsat that “President Talabani is the president of the Republic of Iraq and is currently undergoing treatment for the health condition that has afflicted him, and God willing we await his safe and sound return. Therefore, to talk of his replacement is inappropriate and ineffective at this time.”

The former deputy prime minister of Iraq went on to say that “the political and historical statues and consideration towards president Talibani calls for our patience until the completion of his treatment and his return to the homeland, and not creating a crisis out of this subject, which Iraq is not in need of.”

According to the same Kurdish source, Iraqi prime minister Nuri Al-Maliki had reservations regarding Saleh succeeding Talibani, but has backed down because of Iranian pressure and the fact that Maliki needs the presence of a president in order to take on the burden of the state, particularly to maintain balance, and to work on alleviating political conflicts. Maliki feels weak now after being criticized by most political sides.

For his part, Khalid Shwani, the head of the Legal Committee at the Iraqi Council of Representatives, said that the demand of the Public Prosecution office violated the constitution. In a joint news conference with the deputy head of the committee, Amir Al-Kinani, Shwani said that the office does not have the authority to demand the Council of Representatives reconsider the vacant post of the president of the republic, noting that the Public Prosecution Law does not include any article that gives it this authority.

<http://www.aawsat.net/2013/05/article55301840>

Hashemi Rafsanjani still considering whether to remain a candidate

London, Asharq Al-Awsat—Hassan Rouhani has stated that either he or Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani will “withdraw [from Iran’s presidential race] in favor of the other,” according to the FARS news agency. The announcement came in a pre-campaign meeting in the northwestern city of Zanjan on Wednesday.

Hashemi Rafsanjani and Rouhani both enjoy support among the reformists and some sections of moderate conservatives. Rouhani’s

decision not to withdraw has raised the possibility of an agreement between him and Hashemi Rafsanjani over which of the two will run, so as not to split the non-principalist vote.

After Hashemi Rafsanjani's surprise registration on Saturday, many assumed that Hassan Rouhani would withdraw and support Hashemi Rafsanjani, following Seyyed Mohammed Khatami's endorsement of Hashemi Rafsanjani's candidacy.

Inconsistent reports came from Tehran, however, regarding whom Hashemi Rafsanjani has appointed as his campaign managers. There has been no sign thus far that the former president has started his campaign.

Political commentator Abbas Abdi has said that he regards Hashemi Rafsanjani's entry into the race as a temporary tactic aimed at maintaining his political influence. In an interview with the Fara-Ru website on Sunday, he said: "Rafsanjani will not remain a candidate, and will withdraw if Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei gets disqualified."

Abdi continued, saying, "The fact that Rafsanjani's registration at the Interior Ministry was simultaneous with that of Mashaei is a clear sign that he is determined to make sure Mashaei will not win."

Sources close to Hashemi Rafsanjani, including his son, Mohsen Hashemi, have denied such speculation and have reconfirmed the former president's intention to stay in the race.

In related news, various figures from the principalist faction have increased their attacks on Hashemi Rafsanjani. According to the Fara-Ru website, Karim Qodoosi, an MP for the city of Mashad, announced on

Wednesday that "a letter signed by 100 MPs was sent to the Guardian Council asking to disqualify him."

Qodoosi also said that this is "the second letter sent to the Guardian Council in less than two weeks explaining why Rafsanjani should not be able to run for office." However, he "acknowledged that such a request would not oblige the Guardian Council to disqualify Rafsanjani."

Other prominent principalist candidates, including Haddad A'del and Baqer Qalibaf, have strongly attacked Hashemi Rafsanjani's eligibility to run for office, referring to his weak performance from 1989 to 1997, when he was president. They also criticized Hashemi Rafsanjani's implicit support for the Green Movement in the aftermath of the disputed 2009 election.

The only principalist candidate who has refrained from attacking Hashemi Rafsanjani is Ali Akbar Velayati, who served as foreign minister in the former president's administration.

Hashemi Rafsanjani's ability to attract vast numbers of moderate- and reform-oriented votes has angered and deeply divided the principalist faction that is loyal to Ayatollah Khamenei.

If Rahim Mashaei is approved as a candidate, then it is possible that we will see a shift in the principalists' attitude—possibly becoming less hostile and even surprisingly welcoming towards Hashemi Rafsanjani's win over Mashaei. But without Mashaei in the race, the principalists would be determined to deter Hashemi Rafsanjani from running.

<http://www.aawsat.net/2013/05/article55301884>

Saudi envoy: UN resolution a victory for the Syrian people

London, Asharq Al-Awsat—An Arab-backed resolution calling for a political transition in Syria was passed by the UN General Assembly yesterday, despite a noticeable drop in international support for the Syrian opposition.

Over 70 countries declined to vote “yes” over fears the resolution could spoil a new US–Russian effort to end the escalating conflict, as well as over fears about extremism among the Syrian rebels.

While the non-binding text has no legal force, resolutions of the 193-nation assembly can carry significant moral and political weight. There were 107 votes in favor, 12 against and 59 abstentions—a drop in support compared with a resolution condemning the Syrian government that passed in August with 133 votes in favor, 12 against and 31 abstentions.

The Saudi ambassador to the United Nations, Abdullah Al-Mouallimi, described the decision as a “victory for the Syrian people.”

He told Asharq Al-Awsat that, “The decision demonstrates that the international community is still keen on expressing support for the Syrian people and condemning the regime that practiced crimes against its own people.”

The resolution welcomes the establishment of the Syrian National Coalition, the main

opposition group, “as effective interlocutors needed for a political transition” and notes “wide international acknowledgment” that the group is the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. It also strongly condemns President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime for its escalating use of heavy weapons and “gross violations” of human rights.

Russia, a close ally of Assad, strongly opposed the resolution drafted by Qatar and other Arab nations, which the Assad government has accused of arming the rebels seeking to overthrow him. But Moscow, which along with China has used its veto three times to prevent Security Council action against Assad, could not block the motion as there are no vetoes in the General Assembly.

Diplomats said the Russian delegation wrote to all UN members urging them to oppose the resolution.

Moscow is also insisting on Iran’s participation in the Geneva II conference scheduled for June. Following a meeting with US secretary of state John Kerry at meeting of the Arctic Council in Sweden, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov told reporters that “those who participated in last year’s Geneva meeting should participate in the new congress as well. This includes key players in the region, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, and we will work on achieving this.”

Yesterday’s vote came as Washington and European governments have been mulling the pros and cons of supplying arms to Syrian rebels.

A French official told the Reuters news agency that France was floating a proposal that the



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STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

European Union should ease an arms embargo but delay acting on the decision to intensify pressure on Damascus to negotiate an end to the ongoing civil war.

<http://www.aawsat.net/2013/05/article55302>
[021](#)