



**ORSAM**

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

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ  
ÖZGÜR DÜŞÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT  
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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## 1. IRAQ

### US Embassy welcomes Cabinet's meeting in Erbil

The United States Embassy in Baghdad welcomed the Cabinet's meeting in Erbil, Kurdistan Region. In a statement to the press on Sunday, June 9, the Embassy expressed welcome for holding the Iraqi Cabinet its meeting, as well as the accompanying meetings, in Erbil, including the meeting held between Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and the Region's President, Massoud Barazan and its Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barazani, which came after the unity meeting hosted by Ammar al-Hakeem. The statement went on, "This is another sign showing that Iraqi leaders are committed to consolidate their state, through the Constitution, to isolate terrorists who seek to implant sectarianism." The Embassy added in its statement that it is looking forward toward holding, in the coming weeks, the provincial elections in Anbar and Niniveh, as well as reconvening Parliamentary session, where Iraqi leader adhered to deal with outstanding legislations, after last month's increased violence. The statement stressed that the United States will remain committed to share actively the Iraqi government and people, whom it serves, to consolidate mutual interests, stipulated in the Strategic Frame Agreement, including adherence to democratic principles, according to the Iraqi Constitution. Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki chaired, on Sunday morning, a cabinet session in Erbil, he then met with the Prime Minister of Kurdistan

Region, 's Prime Minister, Nechirvan Barazani, and its President, Massoud Barazani.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFKJI](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFKJI)

### The Popular movement in Kirkuk welcomes Barzani –Maliki's meeting

A member of coordinating popular movement committees, Ismail Ahmed al-Hadidi considered the "success" of the Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's meeting with the President of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani as "the fruit of the national efforts of and a way to adopt the language of dialogue instead of escalation."

"We as popular masses welcome the meeting that gathered al-Maliki and Barzani, which was the result of great efforts of the national figures, including al-Hakim and the governor of Kirkuk, Dr. Najim al-Din Kareem before more than two months after he met the prime minister in Baghdad."

He added, "What happened today is a gesture of giving priority to diplomatic language instead of bickering and the escalation."

He stressed that "the popular movement welcomes any move that would break the ice and open channels of dialogue and strengthen confidence and achieve the demands of the Iraqi people, especially the provinces six which have protests "

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFKHM](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFKHM)

**Maliki, after meeting with Massoud Barzani: We discussed all outstanding issues and agreed on Article 140**

Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki said his current visit to Arbil was the focus of common interest to both sides as we opened all outstanding issues because stabilizing Iraq is our concern."

He said in a press conference held today after his meeting with the President of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani: "we discussed the latest developments in the region, and the files that were discussed during the visit of the head of the provincial government to Baghdad."

He explained that "we named the characters that will be in charge to continue the discussions to resolve the outstanding issues."

Maliki added: "The President of the Kurdistan region will be in Baghdad soon to continue the dialogue," adding that he would visit the region again and tour in the cities of the Kurdistan and visit Barzan's area.

He continued: "We have agreed on Article 140, and we will achieve the other issues, including the activation of the census and define the borders of the provinces."

For his part, Barzani said that he agreed with Maliki to resolve all outstanding problems between the center and the region in accordance with the Constitution.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFKFL](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFKFL)

### **Maliki: The region undergoing a sectarian dangerous storm.**

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki said: "The region is experienced a sectarian storm and its danger is represented by re-emergence of the terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and al-Nusra, which raised the fear of returning the

fighting in Iraq," noting: "Iraq began to being affected by this storm."

He said in a speech at the start of the cabinet meeting in the province of Arbil on Sunday 9, June: "the Constitution should be our guide to find solutions" adding: "moving to a democratic state from the state of repression, Iraq was experienced, requires considerable effort."

He continued: "Iraq got out from difficult conditions at the time of the former regime, to enter into state of bombings and killings under sectarian strife, but the Iraqis have proved that they are strong enough to stand against fighting and sedition, and we, as politicians, have to stand up with the national reconciliation to set the country's unity and stability."

He said: "The basis on which we're dealing with today is the national base not a party or sectarian base, and belonging to Iraq is the foundation, and that religious and sectarian diversity must be consistent with the interest of the country and the Constitution."

Maliki stressed that: "It is not easy for Iraq from an iron regime to a democratic State, and we will go in this government and the future governments to establish a federal, democratic, pluralistic State."

It is mentioned that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived in Erbil today and the Kurdistan leader Massoud Barzani and Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani as well as a number of officials received him, at the airport. Maliki

chaired, by then, an ordinary session of the Council of Ministers.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFJMI](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFJMI)

### **Kayani: Maliki's visit to Kurdistan will not solve the outstanding problems between the province and Baghdad**

Sulaymaniyah / NINA / The MP, of "Change movement" Mohammed Kayani said that "the visit of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to Kurdistan will not solve the outstanding problems between the two parties.

He said in a press statement today 9, June "a sincere intention, by the two parties, is necessary to resolve differences and follow up the serious issues between them."

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki arrived in Arbil earlier today, where Massoud Barzani, president of the province and Nechirvan Barzani, head of the provincial government received him and a meeting of the Council of Ministers headed by al-Maliki was held.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFJLI](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFJLI)

### **Hakim meets with Senior American official**

The head of the Islamic Supreme Council, Ammar al-Hakim confirmed that "The symbolic meeting of political leaders confirmed matching visions towards the success of the political process and reconstruction of Iraq."

He said, during his meeting with Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Brett McKourk: "crossing the differences requires more political will in

order to develop solutions to the problems and crises experienced by the country." according to a statement for his office issued today.

The two sides discussed, during the meeting, the latest developments in the region and their impact on Iraq."

For his part, McKourk described Hakim's initiative in achieving the symbolic meeting of the political leaders as "a bravery initiative," noting that "Iraq is in dire need to such initiatives because of its positive impact on the success and progress of the political process," stressing "the importance of keeping the momentum of the meetings between Iraqi leaders to complete the laws that contribute calming the situation.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFJKD](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFJKD)

### **Iraqiya Advisor: Hakim's initiative could be the base of a national project to zero Crises**

Iraqiya coalition political advisers, Hani Ashour called for national agreement adopts a policy of reset crisis and remove all tensions and prepare for the upcoming parliamentary elections, rather than transfer crises and suspension problems.

Ashour said in a press statement: "What is required now is to produce a national common draft, under home roof top, which the differences disappear, and prevent heating Iraq's internal front at a time, the regional's countries witness hottest events that reflect negatively on the Iraq."

He added: "The initiative of President of the

Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, Ammar al-Hakim at the symbolic national meeting can be completed to be a national project to reset crises and prepare the Iraqi arena for the upcoming parliamentary elections and give Iraqis a message of reassurance to trust the path of democracy in Iraq."

He explained that "The region is currently inflamed, and the best project now is to calm the Iraqi arena and put the model of coexistence and the democratic process."

The leaders of the political blocs had held a meeting at the headquarters of the Islamic Supreme Council after an invitation called by President of the Council Ammar al-Hakim to bring the views and remove the political differences.

The meeting was attended by Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and Parliament Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi and a number of political blocs' leaders, with the absence of President of the Iraqiya coalition, Iyad Allawi and President of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani as well as Muqtada al-Sadr. The meeting saw a handshake between Maliki and Nujaifi after a political break lasted several months.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFJGL](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFJGL)

### **Nijaifi: Niniveh province is capable to overcome the crisis it is going through**

Speaker of Parliament, Usama al-Nijaifi, stressed that Niniveh province, with the alertness of its people in choosing their representatives to the upcoming Provincial Council, is capable of passing the crisis it is going through.

In a statement to the press on Sunday, June 9, Nijaifi said that, "With the awareness of its people, the Niniveh province is hard to be degraded and is capable of facing all attempts to humiliate it."

He pointed out the need to choose a provincial council capable of getting the province's rights.

Nijaifi described his meeting with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, at the head quarters of the head of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, Ammar al-Hakeem, of being an important meeting, pointing out that security and political situation force him to meet.

Nijaifi stressed that sincere intentions and will are enough to solve the political problems the country is going through.

[http://www.ninanews.com/english/News\\_Details.asp?ar95\\_VQ=GIFKLF](http://www.ninanews.com/english/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GIFKLF)

## **2. IRAN**

### **Kuwaiti MPs Attend Iranian Parliament's Open Session Today**

"We welcome these guests and wish success for them and hope that God willingly their visit will be useful for upgrading Iran-Kuwait ties," Vice-Speaker Mohammad Reza Bahonar said addressing today's session.

Iran and Kuwait have sought to expand bilateral ties through exchanging several high-ranking delegations in the last few years.

Earlier this year, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and his Kuwaiti counterpart Sabah al-Khalid al-Hamad al-Sabah in a meeting underlined the need for further expansion of relations and mutual cooperation between the two countries, specially in parliamentary fields.

They made the remarks in a meeting on the sidelines of the 11th ministerial meeting of the Asian Cooperation Dialogue in the Tajik capital of Dushanbe.

The Iranian and Kuwaiti foreign ministers explored the avenues for bolstering and reinvigoration of bilateral relations.

Salehi termed Iran-Kuwait relations as satisfactory, but meantime demanded the further exchange of high-ranking delegations as well as continued interactions between Iranian and Kuwaiti authorities.

The Kuwaiti foreign minister, for his part, described Iran as a major and influential player in the Middle East region.

Sabah al-Khalid noted that the relations between Iran and Kuwait are based on mutual understanding, interaction and cooperation.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9203180552>

### **Enemies plotting to cause rift among Muslim nations: Iran Speaker**

Iran Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani has warned against plots to sow discord among Muslim nations, stressing the importance of reinforcing unity and negotiations on key regional and international issues.

“Certain powers foster fear among Muslim countries and strengthen extremist and radical groups in the region in order to create rift among Muslim nations and weaken (them),” Larijani said on Sunday.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting head of Iran-Kuwait Parliamentary Friendship Group Ahmad Abdulmohsen al-Mulaifi in Tehran.

Larijani pointed to the ongoing crisis in Syria and stated that political dialog among different Syrian groups is the only solution to the unrest in the Arab country.

“Weapons cannot promote diplomacy,” the top Iranian parliamentarian added.

The crisis in Syria began in March 2011, and many people, including large numbers of soldiers and security personnel have been killed in the violence.

Reports show the chaos is being orchestrated from outside Syria and that a very large number of militants are foreign nationals.

Al-Mulaifi, for his part, said the Muslim Ummah is going through a sensitive time and urged using wisdom, dialog and negotiations to remove obstacles in the way of the unity and progress of Muslim countries.

Meanwhile, in a Sunday meeting with the Kuwaiti official, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said the Islamic Republic’s principled policy is based on promoting peace, stability and security in the region in line with the interests of all regional nations and based

on mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries.

He pointed to the ongoing crises in the region, including the Syria crisis, and stressed the importance of determining Syria's fate by the Syrians without the interference of foreign powers.

Salehi called on regional countries to boost interaction in order to help the Syrian people and government resolve the crisis at the earliest.

Al-Mulaifi, for his part, said the intensified violence and sectarian strife would only inflict harm on innocents, calling for the resolution of problems on the basis of understanding and dialogue.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/09/308057/enemies-sow-discord-among-muslims/>

#### **No attack on Beirut Embassy: Iran's Araqchi**

Iran Foreign Ministry Spokesman Abbas Araqchi has dismissed reports about an attack on the Islamic Republic's Embassy in Lebanon's capital city, Beirut, describing them as incorrect.

"A small group gathered in front of Iran's Embassy in Beirut and was dispersed by the security forces," Araqchi said on Sunday.

"From what we have learned, a small group of the supporters of Takfiri groups clashed with the Lebanese army and security forces in an area, which was at least one kilometer away from the Islamic Republic of Iran Embassy compound, and casualties have been reported," the Iranian spokesperson added.

Media reports quoted Lebanon's security sources as saying that an unarmed Lebanese man was killed on Sunday by gunfire in the vicinity of the Iranian Embassy in Beirut. It is not yet known who killed the man.

The Lebanese army cordoned off the area near the Iranian Embassy.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/09/308054/no-attack-on-beirut-embassy-iran/>

#### **Iranian Army's Ground Forces to hold armored maneuvers: Cmdr.**

The commander of the Iranian Army's Ground Forces has announced plans to hold several maneuvers to increase the preparedness of Iran's armed forces in countering threats against the country.

Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan said on Sunday that armored vehicles would participate in drills to be held in the southeastern and northeastern parts of the country in the current Persian calendar year (started March 21).

"Along with these drills, we will try to boost the training level of the forces and improve their operational capacities ... for ... countering threats in an asymmetric combat," the commander pointed out.

Over the past few years, Iran has held several military exercises to enhance the defense capabilities of its armed forces and to test modern military tactics and equipment.

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly assured other nations, especially its neighbors, that its military might poses no threat to other

countries, stating that its defense doctrine is based on deterrence.

Iran's Army Ground Forces recently held a military drill, codenamed Bait-ul-Muqaddas 25, in the central Iranian province of Esfahan and succeeded in achieving all objectives.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/06/09/308029/iran-army-to-hold-more-military-drills/>

### **Rohani says fallacy that casting ballots has no effect is 'word of Satan'**

TEHRAN – Presidential candidate Hassan Rohani told a group of his supporters in the northern province of Gilan on Sunday that the fallacy that casting ballot in the presidential election is futile because the result of the election is predetermined is a 'word of Satan'.

At a gathering of his loyalists at a sports complex in Tehran on Saturday, Rohani also said he will restore the Iranian people's honor and dignity if he is elected president in this month's election.

"Some people are still taking pride in the country's poverty and foreign humiliation," Rohani said. "We are all seeking change, prudence, and hope."

Rohani added, "The young generation cannot accept unemployment, high inflation, and a sense of disappointment about an uncertain future."

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/108371-rohani-says-fallacy-that-casting-ballots-has-no-effect-is-word-of-satan>

### **Some members of Qom Seminary Teachers Society support Velayati**

TEHRAN – A number of members of the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom have issued a statement announcing their support for Ali Akbar Velayati in this month's presidential election.

The statement, published on Sunday, was signed by Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, the head of the supreme council of the society.

The statement read that the Society of Seminary Teachers of Qom called on the Iranian people to vibrantly participate in the June 14 presidential election to create another political epic.

Velayati is the senior foreign policy advisor of the Supreme Leader. He served as Iran's foreign minister for 16 years during the administrations of former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi and former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/108370-some-members-of-qom-seminary-teachers-society-support-velayati>

### **Jalili: West should know that Iran will not relinquish nuclear rights**

TEHRAN – Presidential candidate Saeed Jalili has said that the West should know that Iran will not relinquish its rights, including its right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In a television program broadcast on Saturday night, Jalili also said, "The pressure and sanctions exerted on Iran prove that something valuable has been produced in the country."

“It means that [the nuclear program] is of benefit to the country,” he added.

He also said, “A strong government is not the one that expands its security apparatus, rather the one whose forces work together with empathy and shared values.”

<http://www.tehrantimes.com/politics/108369-jalili-west-should-know-that-iran-will-not-relinquish-nuclear-rights>

### 3. ISRAEL – PALESTINE

#### **Police accused of brutality at Jerusalem protest**

Protesters against proposed plans to export much of Israel’s natural gas, as well as government budget cuts, met with stiff police resistance Saturday night when they attempted to march on the Prime Minister’s Residence in Jerusalem.

The approximately 250 protesters encountered a large police presence, including Border Police, mounted police and a water cannon truck, according to protest organizers.

Participants in the protest charged police with use of excessive force after at least one individual was injured. One man, Yishai Oltchik, wrote on Facebook that a police officer had kicked him for no apparent reason, and that mounted police officers trampled other protesters as well.

Police spokesmen Mickey Rosenthal said officers arrested seven protesters — including two of the organizers of the demonstration — after they impeded the Jerusalem Light Rail, causing significant delays. Six were released

after questioning, and one remained in custody for charges of disturbing the peace.

Rosenthal denied charges of excessive force, noting that the protest “was not coordinated with police” and that the demonstration was met with “no police brutality whatsoever.”

The activists voiced opposition to the government’s consideration of measures to export up to 50 percent of Israel’s recent natural gas finds as well as sweeping austerity measures, including an increased value added tax, recently approved by the Netanyahu government.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/police-accused-of-brutality-at-jerusalem-protest/>

#### **Amid uproar, deputy defense minister stands by rejection of two states**

Opposition MK calls for Danny Danon’s dismissal, fellow coalition partners say they’ll bolt if Palestinian state off the table

Deputy Defense Minister Danny Danon (Likud) on Sunday stuck to his guns and defended statements he’d made to The Times of Israel last week in which he claimed that most of those in the coalition are opposed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Oy vey! Is it such a criminal offense to oppose a two-state solution?” he said in an interview with Army Radio.

Danon dismissed claims that the views he had expressed in last week’s interview were his and not those of the government, saying, “There are factions within the government

that say that if there should be progress toward establishing a Palestinian state, they would oppose it.” He said he personally opposes a two-state solution, that most of the public opposes it, and “that in the Likud there’s certainly no majority for it.” The Jewish Home and Yisrael Beytenu parties also oppose it, he indicated.

“There’s nothing new here,” he said in defense of his statements, pointing out that “there are no negotiations [with the Palestinians]” in the first place.

Danon had said in his Times of Israel interview that “there was never a government discussion, resolution or vote about the two-state solution... and nobody will bring it to a vote, it’s not smart to do it — but if you bring it to a vote, you will see the majority of Likud ministers, along with the Jewish Home [party], will be against it.”

Coalition members voiced outrage Sunday at Danon’s statements, while opposition MKs called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to remove the deputy defense minister from his post.

Labor Party MK Nahman Shai told Israel Radio that if Danon had erred in his assessment of the government’s intentions then the prime minister must immediately dismiss him, and advance the peace process.

“The prime minister must immediately relieve Danny Danon of his duties because of the grave damage his words inflicted on US Secretary of State John Kerry’s efforts to revive peace negotiations,” said MK Isaac Herzog (Labor), a former welfare minister, on Saturday.

Justice minister and chief negotiator Tzipi Livni (Hatnua) said Danon’s statements against the two-state solution “harmed the peace process.”

Her fellow party member, Environmental Protection Minister Amir Peretz, wrote on his Facebook wall that “whoever tries to bury the idea of two states gives credence to the idea of a binational state and endangers the future of Zionism.”

MK Amram Mitzna (Hatnua) told Army Radio that “it’s surprising that the deputy defense minister doesn’t understand that his position is different from that of an ordinary MK who says such things.” Mitzna said that Danon’s statements undermined the stability of the coalition, noting that Hatnua had joined the government in order to advance negotiations with the Palestinians. Hatnua, he said, would break off from the coalition if a two-state solution were not a basis for negotiations.

“The condition [of Hatnua’s inclusion in the coalition] is the advancement of the peace process. If we reach the conclusion that it’s not part of the process, we won’t be [in the government],” he said.

Conservative Israel Hayom columnist Dan Margalit tweeted in response to Danon’s comments, “In what country can Danny Danon keep his position after saying that the government doesn’t intend what its prime minister committed to do? Bibi [Netanyahu] — wake up.”

The Prime Minister’s Office took the unusual step of contacting The Times of Israel on Shabbat to firmly distance itself from Danon’s comments.

His remarks “do not represent the position of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the government of Israel.”

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/amid-uproar-danon-stands-by-rejection-of-two-states/>

**Facing small protest, Women of the Wall pray unimpeded Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox demonstrators prevented from reaching site; women’s section divided to accommodate progressive prayer group**

Despite predictions of ten thousand demonstrators, only several hundred ultra-Orthodox men turned up Sunday morning at Jerusalem’s Western Wall to protest the Women of the Wall’s monthly prayer gathering.

The women, who numbered over 300, were escorted by police from a nearby park and shielded through a decoy entrance at the foot of Judaism’s holiest site. Hundreds of officers were on hand to prevent injury to the women and keep the demonstration from getting out of hand.

In an effort to reduce friction following last month’s disturbances, ultra-Orthodox rabbis asked that only adults attend the demonstration. Police appeared to have come prepared on Sunday morning. They set up a separate area within the women’s section to prevent friction between the Women of the Wall and the more traditional women worshippers.

Still, there was a brief scuffle between one member of Women of the Wall and an ultra-Orthodox woman who was calling the group an “abomination.”

“Our aim is to flood the area with protesters and thus prevent the women from entering the premises and causing a provocation,” Yitzhak Brenner, one of the ultra-Orthodox organizers, had told the Hebrew daily Maariv. “Everyone realizes that this is a holy site and that their [the women’s] sole goal is to cause controversy. We need to put an end to it.”

Police prevented hundreds of ultra-Orthodox from accessing the site, the Haredi news site Behadrei Haredim reported. There were also reports that roads leading to the Old City were closed off to prevent access to the Western Wall.

The women didn’t bring in Torah scrolls after Shmuel Rabinovitch, the rabbi of the Western Wall, vowed to forbid them from carrying in the scrolls and reading from the Torah. In a police preparation meeting last week, the police produced a document showing the ban on torah scrolls, so the women decided to not bring in any on Sunday. But Einat Horovitz, legal counsel to the group, told The Times of Israel that Women of the Wall was looking into the legality and hoped to do a complete prayer service next month.

The group’s members have in the past been arrested for wearing prayer shawls due to a law forbidding the practice that falls outside the wall’s “local custom.” In April, however, a judge determined that the group’s activities — including reading from a Torah scroll — did not contravene the law.

“This is not a provocation, but rather a sincere, heartfelt prayer service, which we have been holding every month for 24 years,”

said Women of the Wall director Anat Hoffman.

On Friday, a youth from the West Bank was arrested after he inquired, on a website, whether shooting members of the Women of the Wall while they wear the tallit, or prayer shawl, is permissible according to Jewish law.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/police-prepare-for-western-wall-showdown/>

### **Israeli authorities use far wider surveillance powers than those causing storm in US**

Controversial invasions of privacy exposed in the PRISM program to root out terrorists are less dramatic than those routinely implemented under Israeli law

If, as is being alleged in some circles, Israeli companies were involved in helping the US National Security Agency implement its PRISM data-gathering program, it stands to reason that those companies would have “practiced” their techniques on Israelis first in order to perfect their methodology and technology. And whether or not the two companies that are being cited did indeed work with the US government to gather information, Israel would have been a perfect “sandbox” (virtual practice zone) for the companies to perfect their technology surveillance, according to attorney Jonathan Klinger.

That is because the laws regarding privacy on the Internet and electronic communications in Israel are much more “liberal” — for the security agencies, that is — than they are in many other democracies, notably the US. Indeed, Israelis can only envy the uproar

among Americans over the PRISM program, says Klinger, an internet privacy expert. Compared to the extremely wide powers of Israeli police and security organizations over electronic data, “the powers of the American agencies are a joke.”

According to an article in online computer magazine Wired, published last year but now again making headlines as the surveillance controversy unfolds in the US, two companies with Israeli connections or roots, Verint and Narus Systems, helped the NSA with its wiretapping and online surveillance activities.

Their websites would suggest both companies are capable of that kind of activity: Verint’s “Communications and Cyber Intelligence Solutions readily handle vast amounts of data from a wide variety of sources,” and its technology is capable of communications interception, mobile location tracking, “tactical communications intelligence,” and more, the company’s site says.

Narus (now owned by U.S. corporation Boeing) offers “enterprises and governments the tools to become fully aware and ready to respond to any event that may compromise their assets, people, environments or communities. Our technology is already in place around the globe, analyzing 30% of the world’s IP traffic and protecting some of the largest networks across five continents,” according to its site.

With the technology supplied by companies like these, the NSA, or any other government security agency, could quickly analyze hundreds of millions of communications (whether phone, e-mail, text message, etc.) for specified criteria, like terror plots. But in order to do the analysis, the security agencies need data to analyze – and according to the reports that have emerged this week, that data was supplied, whether willingly or otherwise, by Google, Facebook, Twitter, and other online communication portals.

According to the reports, the US government’s PRISM data-gathering program (which, according to James Clapper, US Director of National Intelligence, is not aimed at Americans, but against foreigners, and only to prevent terror attacks) is facilitated by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which is specifically aimed at gathering intelligence on enemy agents or terrorists who are not US citizens. The government must show probable cause of security concerns to the organizations from which it is requesting the information.

That is apparently not the case in Israel, Klinger wrote in a blog post, “giving my two cents on Prism. Over the past decade, Israel has enacted a number of surveillance laws that allow unrestrained use of personal information of citizens for routine investigations, not only for the prevention of terrorism.

Among those laws is one ratified by the Knesset in 2007 allowing police and other agencies to request – and get – information about individuals under investigation, even without the requirement to get a warrant from a judge. Companies are required to supply information on individuals who may be connected – even circumstantially – to a crime. For example, if police suspect that a murder took place at a certain time and a specific location, they can request location data on customers from cellphone service providers, in order to identify those who were in the area when the crime was committed, said Klinger.

In 2009, police filed 9,000 requests for information from cellphone and Internet companies, including 2,000 for offenses relating to “public order” – offenses which, Klinger said, often had political overtones, aimed at leaders of protest groups and movements.

In fact, Klinger said, many of the activists who led protests over high prices and monopolization in the Israeli economy over the past several years have reported to him that their e-mail accounts (often Google Mail accounts) were hacked, as was Klinger’s own account several months ago. Google, in fact, has supplied police in Israel with information about hundreds of users over the past several years, and it’s likely other companies have done so as well. The difference is that “we know about Google, because they report the requests made by police. The other companies do not make such reports.”

In 2008, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel filed a lawsuit against police and other security organizations, as well as against communications companies like Bezeq, cellphone service providers Cellcom and Pelephone, Internet service providers Netvision and Hot, and many others, claiming that police and security agencies, in collusion with the communications companies, had gone way beyond their authorities in demanding information about customers. The courts dismissed the case. Apparently emboldened, said Klinger, the government asked the Knesset to expand the number of agencies that could request data, to include tax authorities, the Agriculture and Environment Ministries, and even the Parks and Nature Authority.

As things stand today, all those agencies, and more, can request information from communications companies without having to present a warrant. Companies that refuse to comply may be hauled into court to justify why they refused. In such cases, said Klinger, the courts invariably rule for the government.

But that's all par for the course in Israel, said Klinger. "Israelis are used to being spied on all the time," he said. "Employers read their employees' e-mail, the state sets up cameras to monitor speeding, parking, perimeter security, and others. The question we have to ask is: Do we need to be defended from criminals — or from the state?"

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-authorities-use-far-wider-surveillance-powers-than-those-causing-storm-in-us/>

## **Labor MK calls on PM to fire Danon for rejecting 2-state solution**

Labor MK Isaac Herzog on Saturday called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to remove Deputy Defense Ministry Danny Danon from his post for claiming in an interview to the Times of Israel that the government is not interested in advancing a two-state solution.

"The prime minister must immediately relieve Danny Danon of his duties because of the grave damage his words inflicted on US Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to revive peace negotiations," said Herzog, a former welfare minister.

"Danon's words carry a tone of disrespect and condescension towards the prime minister, who just a few days ago at the Knesset spoke of the need for an agreement with the Palestinians. It is time for the government to decide its true position on this critical issue and make it clear to the Israeli people and the international community once and for all," Herzog added.

In an interview with The Times of Israel, which was published on Thursday, Danon argued that a strong majority in the government and the coalition oppose a two-state solution with the Palestinians and would block the creation of a Palestinian state if such a proposal ever came to a vote.

Earlier Saturday, opposition leader Shelly Yachimovich told Netanyahu to take steps toward a political peace agreement with the Palestinians, adding that her party would consider joining the coalition if such a step were necessary to achieve that goal.

The Labor Party leader, speaking at a Shabbat culture series in Ness Ziona, said there wouldn't be a "better Palestinian partner in the next few years" and that the dramatic shifts around the Middle East are not in Israel's favor. The majority of lawmakers in the Knesset support peace talks, she added.

Environmental Protection Minister Amir Peretz (Hatnua) also responded to Danon's words, saying "anyone who tries to bury the two-state solution gives life to the idea of a binational state and endangers the future of Zionism. Hatnua entered the coalition in order to advance negotiations on a two-state solution and will continue to do so," said the former defense minister.

The Danon interview, with its no-nonsense summation of the anti-Palestinian statehood mindset of most coalition members, has made international headlines, and apparently prompted discomfort in the Prime Minister's Office.

The Prime Minister's Office took the unusual step of contacting The Times of Israel on Shabbat to firmly distance itself from Danon's comments.

His remarks "do not represent the position of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the government of Israel," sources in the PMO said in response to Danon's interview.

Yachimovich beseeched Netanyahu to take "brave steps" toward peace talks.

"The opposition won't behave like the opposition on these matters, but will support you from its benches," she said, adding that, although Labor strongly disagrees with the social and economic policies of Netanyahu's Likud, her party would nonetheless "reconsider offers to join the government" if necessary.

"We will not let you fall because of it [the pursuit of peace talks]," Yachimovich said, directing her comments at the prime minister.

She explained that the Labor Party would support the prime minister and provide him a political safety net to advance peace talks. "We are saying to you, Netanyahu, 'go forward.'"

Earlier this week, during his first major interview with an Israeli news outlet since he became deputy minister, Danon said the current government would not back a two-state peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"Look at the government: there was never a government discussion, resolution or vote about the two-state solution," Danon said. "If you will bring it to a vote in the government — nobody will bring it to a vote, it's not smart to do it — but if you bring it to a vote, you will see the majority of Likud ministers, along with the Jewish Home [party], will be against it."

The sources in the Prime Minister's Office said Saturday that the prime minister "is interested in a resumption of negotiations without preconditions," and that his positions regarding support for a two-state solution remain in force.

“Netanyahu calls on the president of the Palestinian Authority to restart talks without delay at which all issues will be raised to discussion,” the sources said. “The Palestinian Authority will raise its demands, and Israel will raise its demands which include, among others, stringent security arrangements, recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people, and the declaration of an end to the conflict.”

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/labor-mk-calls-on-pm-to-fire-danon-for-rejecting-2-state-solution/>

### **For Ethiopia-born Miss Israel, an emotional return**

Yityish Titi Aynaw goes back to her country of birth, to see the house where she grew up and her mother died, and to accompany extended family on aliyah to Israel

Israel’s first Ethiopian-born beauty queen Yityish Titi Aynaw made an emotional return trip this week to her native homeland, to accompany extended members of her family on their aliyah journey to Israel.

Aynaw, 21, from Netanya, was chosen Miss Israel 2013 in February. She had left Ethiopia with members of her immediate family at age 10.

“Coming back is very emotional. I grew up here but left behind my loved ones. It’s very hard,” she said to a TV crew from Channel 2, which accompanied her on the trip.

Once in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian passersby greeted the beauty queen with calls of “congratulations, Miss Israel.” At the market, onlookers commended her for meeting US

President Barack Obama in March and told her she put Ethiopia on the map.

She responded graciously in Amharic, aware that she was standing out with her pink dress and high heels.

“Since I arrived in Israel over 10 years ago, I didn’t speak about the country I came from. It’s like I forgot everything,” Aynaw said, looking around for places and things that would jolt her memory.

She traveled to the house she grew up in, with mixed feelings; curious to see it but filled with emotion over her mother’s passing in that very home.

“I didn’t completely deal with my mother’s death. I didn’t talk about it. I was afraid to say the word mom. I was afraid people would feel sorry for me and it’s not something I wanted,” she said.

On a trip to Gondar to visit her mother’s resting place, as well as the Jewish Agency’s transit camp, Aynaw finally broke down.

The graveyard, she said, is filled with people whose only wish was to go live in Israel.

At the transit camp, she greeted some of the Ethiopians who were waiting to join their families in Israel — including one of her uncles and his family.

“I saw myself as a little girl at the center, and it broke me. My life is unquestionably better now. They don’t have what I have — all they have is hope. These people have been waiting and the only thing they hold on to is the hope,” she said.

"I have a Cinderella story, but there was no prince who came along to save me. You have to work hard for success," she concluded.

#### 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

##### Turkish prime minister tours Maghreb

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited the Maghreb last week, accompanied by several members of his government and a large delegation of Turkish businessmen.

The aim of the trip was to increase Turkey's economic partnerships with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia.

On Thursday (June 6th), the last day of Erdogan's two-day visit to Tunis, the countries announced 21 new agreements, protocols and memoranda of understanding.

Turkey offered a loan package to Tunisia, which includes financial support for infrastructure projects in healthcare, housing, education and utilities.

"The results of Erdogan's visit to Tunisia reflect a real and strategic development of bilateral relations," Tunisian Prime Minister Ali Larayedh said during the Gammarth signing ceremony.

Turkey will always stand by Tunisia and help it successfully manage the democratic transition, the Turkish prime minister said.

"The success of Tunisia is also the success of Turkey," Erdogan added. He also called for tripling the annual volume of trade from its present 77 million euros.

During his visit, Erdogan met with Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki and Constituent Assembly President Mustapha Ben Jaafar.

"Success in attracting foreign capital supports the country's economy and stimulates future growth, whatever the composition of future governments," business reporter Jihen Laghmeri said. Erdogan's tour took him to Algeria on Tuesday.

In Algiers, the Turkish PM met with Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal and addressed deputies of the National People's Congress.

The two prime ministers also led an Algerian-Turkish business forum to explore partnership opportunities in the sectors of textile, automotive and agribusiness.

Erdogan on Wednesday received an honorary doctorate from Algiers 2 University head Khanour Salah. He also visited the gas plant at the industrial area of Arzew and the new factory built by Turkish company Tosyali Iron and Steel.

The Turkish delegation began their Maghreb tour in Morocco. While in Rabat on Monday, Erdogan called for private sector involvement in efforts to consolidate Moroccan-Turkish economic relations.

However, Moroccan employers did not attend any of the events surrounding Erdogan's visit.

Officially, the General Confederation of Enterprises in Morocco (CGEM) attributed its absence to the late arrival of an invitation to the high-level meeting.

"Our participation would have required proper preparation," CGEM official Jamal Belahrach said.

Yet behind the scenes, the CGEM did not appreciate the presence of Amal Companies, an association of business leaders. Amal Companies, which is said to be close to the Justice and Development Party (PJD), was granted the privilege of preparing the Turkish visit.

"The choice fell to our organisation because of its relations with Turkish entrepreneurs," Amal Companies president Taib Aisse said.

He rejected any closeness with the PJD. "The government is responsible for this issue," Labour Party chief Abdelkrim Benatiq said. "This is a distressing precedent that jeopardises the interests of the country."

"The credibility of Morocco abroad is affected," the opposition leader added. "Employers are divided because of the government. It was necessary to discuss with Turkey every step because of our trade deficit."

During his Morocco stop, Erdogan highlighted the need to reduce the trade imbalance and promote bilateral investment between the two countries.

"The goal is to achieve a trade balance through investment, especially since Morocco has made efforts in recent years to create a real platform that can attract investors from around the world," Moroccan Trade Minister Abdelkader Amara said.

The two sides signed a joint political declaration and co-operation agreements in the transport and maritime sectors. Morocco and Turkey also agreed to create a high-level, consultative strategic partnership.

But as political scientist Jamal Farhani noted, "Nothing has been done to amend the Turkish-Moroccan Free Trade Agreement FTA as desired by employers."

"The government is called upon to act," he said.

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/09/feature-01](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/06/09/feature-01)

### **Kabul Airport Attack: Gunfire, Explosions Reported**

Explosions and gunfire were heard early Monday near Kabul International Airport in Afghanistan, Reuters reported.

Police confirmed the attacks to the AFP, who described them as "ongoing."

Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqi told the AP that three of the assailants had been killed.

Al Jazeera reported that suicide bombers were among the attackers, who struck the military side of the airport.

The New York Times' Sharifullah Sahak also noted that suicide bombers were spotted. According to Sahak, all diplomatic areas were temporarily placed on lockdown and all flights in and out of the airport were suspended.

An airport official told Sahak that insurgents were targeting the U.S. Air Force and narcotics areas of the airport.

KABUL, Afghanistan — At least five heavily armed insurgents were engaged in an hours-long gunbattle with security forces on the perimeter of Afghanistan's main airport Monday after they tried to attack NATO's airport headquarters with rocket-propelled grenades, assault rifles and at least one large bomb, the army and police said.

The airport was closed to all civilian air traffic because of the attack, an airport official said. It was unclear if the attack had damaged facilities inside the airport itself.

Kabul police chief Gen. Mohammad Ayub Salangi said at least two insurgents had been killed so far. There were no casualties among police or civilians, he added.

Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed responsibility for the attack saying the insurgents were targeting NATO.

It was the latest in a series of attacks against the capital since the start of the year. Taliban insurgents have launched intense attacks across the country as Afghan forces take over most security responsibility ahead of most foreign troops' withdrawal next year, more than a decade after the American-led invasion to oust the Taliban regime for sheltering al-Qaida's leadership after the Islamic extremist group launched the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

The last major attack occurred on May 24, when six suicide bombers attacked a guest house belonging to the United Nations-affiliated International Organization for

Migration, killing three people – including a police officer, a guard and a civilian. On May 16, a suicide bomber had rammed a car into a NATO convoy killing 15 people, including two American soldiers and four civilian contractors.

Kabul police said in an announcement that attackers wearing suicide vests had occupied two buildings under construction on the west side of the airport and were firing at the military facility, which was quite a distance away. But it was uncertain if they actually managed to hit anything inside the airport.

A statement said there was at least one large explosion at around 4:30 a.m. and a gunbattle began with security forces.

"It first started with a big explosion which we think was a suicide attack. After that a gunbattle started," said Kabul police spokesman Hashmat Stanikzai. He added that at least five insurgents then occupied two buildings, located in a single compound, and started firing rocket-propelled grenades and automatic weapons.

"Sometimes they are shooting from one building, sometimes from other. It is a residential area and the compound has been surrounded by Afghan security forces. The security forces surrounded the buildings and are being careful because it is a residential area," he added.

Afghan army Gen. Murad Ali Murad said police and military forces were exchanging gunfire with insurgents.

"Outside the airport, in the civilian area, there is a tall building under construction and they are shooting at the military side from there. The building is surrounded and there is sporadic shooting. Not enough to damage the military side. We don't know how many terrorist bombers are in there," he said.

The U.S.-led NATO coalition's Joint Command headquarters at the airport runs the day-to-day operations of the nearly 12-year-old war against insurgents. The airport's military side is also used for NATO transport and other aircraft.

"It started just after dawn prayers and I counted about a dozen explosions, mostly RPG fire, coming from the airport," said Emayatullah, who lives next to the airport. Like many Afghans he uses only one name.

The International Assistance Force's Joint Command said it was aware of reports of an attack but had no further details.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/09/kabul-airport-attack\\_n\\_3413030.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/09/kabul-airport-attack_n_3413030.html)

#### **Egypt sees 5.2% annual tourists rise in April: CAPMAS**

Egypt received 1.1 million tourists in April 2013, 5.2 percent more than the 1 million it received in the same period last year, but still less than April 2010 when 1.2 million visited the country, state statistics agency CAPMAS reported on Sunday.

Minister of Tourism Hisham Zaazou had expected the numbers to reach 2010 levels, when an estimated 14.7 million tourists visited Egypt and generated \$12.5 billion in revenue.

According to the report, the largest proportion of tourists came from Western Europe, followed then by Eastern Europeans and then tourists from the Middle East, who spent a total of 11.1 million nights in the country, 8.4 percent less than last year.

Tourists from Arab countries increased by 3.6 percent to reach almost 182,000 in April 2013. In April 2012 only 175,000 visited Egypt.

However, the average number of nights spent by each Arab tourist was 10.6 nights in April 2013, while in 2012 it was 12.2 nights.

On Friday, a group of 134 Iranians completed a visit of Egypt, the second such tour since a ban on Iranian visitors was lifted, despite protests by some ultra-conservative Sunnis who deem Iranian Shias "heretics" and suspect Iran is trying to spread Shiism in the Sunni-Muslim world.

Egypt's tourism sector received several blows since the beginning of this year, the most serious of which was the highly-publicised hot air balloon accident in Luxor that left 19 tourists dead in late January.

Tourism experts have estimated hotel occupancy rates to have reached approximately 10 percent in hotels in Cairo, the Red Sea and Luxor.

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/73556/Business/Economy/Egypt-sees--annual-tourists-rise-in-April-CAPMAS.aspx>

#### **5. JORDAN and LEBANON**

##### **Anti-Hezbollah protester killed in Lebanon**

Men wielding batons and wearing yellow arm bands evoking Lebanon's Hezbollah attacked

protesters outside the Iranian Embassy in Beirut Sunday during a rally against the militant group's participation in the Syrian civil war. One protester was killed, a senior Lebanese military official and witnesses said.

A military statement said the protesters had just arrived at the embassy area when clashes broke out and a civilian opened fire. The embassy is in a predominantly pro-Hezbollah area.

Witnesses saw men wearing yellow armbands - the color of Hezbollah's flag - attacking the protesters with batons. It was unclear if they were affiliated with the militant Shiite group, and the identity of the gunman was unknown, a senior security official said.

The official identified the man killed as a 28-year-old member of the small Lebanese Option Party, which had called for the anti-Hezbollah protest. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

The Syria conflict is increasingly spilling over into Lebanon, home to a fragile mosaic of more than a dozen religious and ethnic groups. Hezbollah's overt participation in the conflict, backing forces of Syria's President Bashar Assad in a successful campaign to drive rebels out of Qusair near the Lebanese border, heightened tensions.

The Obama administration could decide this week to approve lethal aid for the Syrian rebels, officials said Sunday. Secretary of State John Kerry postponed a planned trip Monday to Israel and three other Mideast countries to participate in White House discussions, said officials who weren't authorized to speak

publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said in a statement Sunday that it backed the Lebanese Red Cross in evacuating since Friday 87 Syrians seriously wounded in the fighting in Qusair to hospitals in Lebanon.

The leader of Hezbollah, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, said during the battle for Qusair that he would side with Assad until the rebels are defeated. Assad's Syria is Hezbollah's main ally and supplier of weapons.

Gunmen from rival religious sects have gone to Syria to fight on the rebel side. Rebels have threatened to target Hezbollah's bases in Lebanon.

Clashes in northern Lebanon between rival Lebanese groups since last month claimed more than 28 lives, and rockets have targeted Hezbollah strongholds.

Hezbollah's rivals have increased their criticism, deepening a political stalemate and postponing elections for 17 months.

The Lebanese Option Party is headed by a Shiite politician, Ahmad El Assaad, who has long been opposed to Hezbollah. Sunday's clash outside the Iranian Embassy marked rare fighting between two opposing Shiite groups.

The official Lebanese National News Agency said the army cordoned off the area of the clashes in southern Beirut. The private Al-Jadeed Lebanese TV said a girl who was protesting was also wounded.

The station said the protester who was killed was shot twice in the leg, once in the back, and was hit on the head with a baton.

The protest at the embassy coincided with another small rally in downtown Beirut also criticizing Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria's conflict.

Dozens of protesters, including many Syrians, converged on Beirut's central Martyrs Square where a large banner read: "Rejecting Hezbollah's fighting in Syria."

"Those fighting in Syria are not Lebanese. Their culture, their flag, money and weapons are Iranian," said Saleh el-Mashnouk, an ardent critic of Hezbollah. "We are here to erase the shame that struck Lebanon because of them."

Lebanese protester Samara el-Hariri, 31, said Syria's war is hurting Lebanon's economy and increasing sectarian tension. "My country is stricken," she said.

Shiite Iran, Hezbollah's patron, has strongly backed Assad, who belongs to a Shiite offshoot.

The fighting in Syria has claimed more than 80,000 lives and displaced several million people. Beside Lebanon, it has also threatened to spill into neighboring countries, like Israel and Turkey.

In Syria, fighting between government troops and rebels raged in different provinces, including near the capital, Damascus, and in the northern Aleppo province. Pro-regime media outlets said that after securing control of Qusair, government forces are preparing to move to recapture the contested city of

Aleppo next. Activists said there were no signs of a new push on the city or its surrounding areas.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on a network of Syrians inside the country for information, said six regime fighters were killed in clashes in Aleppo. The city has been carved up into areas controlled by rebels and the regime, and families have been displaced by shelling.

The Observatory also documented a rare case of a public killing of a 15-year-old youth by Islamist rebel fighters in the city of Aleppo. The center said the gunmen detained Mohammed Kattaa late Saturday, accusing him of being an "infidel" for mentioning Islam's Prophet Muhammad in vain.

The witnesses told the center the gunmen overheard the teenager arguing with a colleague, telling him that he would not lend him money even if "Muhammad comes back to earth," a common phrase used to describe an impossible task.

The men then brought Kattan back to the coffee shop where he works, with his shirt over his face and his back covered in marks from whips, the witnesses told the Observatory.

The militants threatened the same punishment for anyone who commits blasphemy, the witnesses said. Then they shot the boy in front of his parents and a crowd before fleeing the scene.

It was not clear which rebel group the gunmen belonged to.

Rights groups have warned against rising abuses by rebel fighters, including killing of captured regime soldiers or allied fighters. Kattan's case was a rare example of rebels killing a civilian for blasphemy.

<http://www.cortezjournal.com/article/20130609/API/1306090585/Anti-Hezbollah-protester-killed-in-Lebanon>

### **87 wounded from Qusair area treated in Lebanon**

Since 7 June, Lebanese Red Cross emergency medical services, with the support of the ICRC, have evacuated 87 Syrians seriously wounded in fighting in Syria's Qusair region. The wounded have been transferred to hospitals in the Bekaa Valley and Tripoli.

"We will do our best to ensure that all wounded people reaching Lebanon receive the medical attention they need," said Robert Mardini, the ICRC's head of operations for the Near and Middle East. "Those who have already arrived may only represent the tip of the iceberg -- we don't have information on how many people have been wounded or killed, or on the number of people who remain in Qusair."

"We are in regular contact with the Syrian authorities with a view to entering areas in and around Qusair where civilians and wounded people have taken refuge. We intend to deliver humanitarian aid, especially medical supplies, in those areas," he added.

"Today the focus of the media is on Qusair, but let's not forget that there are many other places around the country, such as Rural

Damascus and Aleppo, where fighting is taking place and people are suffering," said Mr Mardini. "People are dying from conditions that would not have been fatal had medical attention been provided in time. It is imperative that humanitarian aid – especially medical supplies, food and clean water – reach all those in need."

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/document/s/update/2013/06-09-syria-lebanon-wounded.htm>

### **Tanks in Beirut as Syria protest leaves one dead**

Lebanese troops blocked streets in Beirut with tanks and barbed wire for several hours on Sunday after the killing of a protester outside the Iranian embassy raised factional tensions already inflamed by the war in Syria.

The man died during a clash between rival groups of Shi'ite Muslims after militiamen from the Iranian-backed Hezbollah movement opened fire when protesters drew up at the embassy, the latest sign of Syria's violence spilling over to its neighbors.

In Syria itself, fighting intensified in the north, where rebels said President Bashar al-Assad's forces and their Lebanese Hezbollah allies were preparing an offensive after success last week in seizing a strategic town further south.

In the past week Assad's forces and Hezbollah captured the town of Qusair, which controls vital supply routes across Syria and with Lebanon, a sign of reversing momentum after the rebels seized swathes of the country in the second half of last year.

Battles raged on Sunday near Al-Nubbul and Zahra, two rural Shi'ite Muslim enclaves outside the commercial hub Aleppo in Syria's north, and intensified in Aleppo itself.

"The aim is to use the two villages as forward bases to make advances in Aleppo and its countryside," said Brigadier General Mustafa Al-Sheikh, a rebel commander and former senior officer in Assad's military, referring to government tactics.

"The regime considers that it has received a shot in the arm after the Qusair battle, but they will find that it will not be easy to advance in Aleppo," Sheikh said, speaking from an undisclosed location in northern Syria.

The civil war now pits Assad, from the Alawite offshoot of Shi'ite Islam, and Shi'ite Hezbollah against mainly Sunni Muslim rebel groups. Assad is backed by Shi'ite Iran and armed by Russia. The rebels are armed by Sunni Arab countries Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and backed by Turkey and the West.

Much of the north near the Turkish border has been held by rebels since last year and frontlines inside Aleppo itself have been largely static for months.

An article in the semi-official Syrian al-Watan daily said the Syrian army was "deploying heavily in the countryside near Aleppo in preparation for a battle that will be fought inside the city and on its outskirts."

"Besieged areas will be freed in the first stages and troops which have been on the defensive will go on the offensive," the article said.

Activists said at least ten rebel fighters and six loyalist troops were killed in intensifying combat in the last 24 hours in Aleppo, Syria's largest metropolis, which has been divided into rebel-held and loyalist controlled sectors for a year.

Sheikh said the army has been using helicopters to re-enforce Nubbul and Zahra with loyalist troops including Hezbollah fighters and recruits from Iraq. There was no independent confirmation of any Hezbollah presence near Aleppo.

Hezbollah has pledged to fight alongside Assad until victory in the Syrian war, in which at least 80,000 people have been killed. It does not comment on the specific activities of its fighters in Syria.

#### HEZBOLLAH PARTICIPATION

Hezbollah's participation raises the prospect of fighting spreading to Lebanon, which has never fully recovered from its own 1975-1990 civil war.

In Beirut, the Lebanese army, which has limited means to impose itself on armed factions, deployed armored vehicles and set up roadblocks to cordon the city center and neighborhoods controlled by Hezbollah. Traffic was restored toward evening.

Demonstrators from a variety of groups, including Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and Christians, in protest against Hezbollah's newly prominent role supporting Assad. When protesters from a small Shi'ite party opposed

to Hezbollah arrived at the Iranian embassy in a bus, a Reuters journalist saw them clash with black-clad Hezbollah militiamen, who opened fire.

Lebanese security officials said one of the protesters, who was unarmed, was killed and several people were hurt.

"What happened today makes us feel there is a very difficult period ahead. We are bringing disasters upon ourselves by interfering in others' affairs," said hotel owner Ali Hammoud. "No one will come to Lebanon now; our concern now is just to stay alive."

A member of the Lebanese parliament who supports the Sunni former prime minister Saad Hariri said Hezbollah must pull its fighters out. "Hezbollah has driven Lebanon into a tunnel without end," said Nuhad Mashnouq.

In Jordan, the United States began military exercises on Sunday that have seen it deploy Patriot anti-aircraft missiles, fighter jets and 4,500 troops to the country, an ally neighboring Syria.

U.S. officials have said they could leave the new weapons in place after the exercises are over. Russia has complained about the deployment, especially of the Patriots, which it sees as potentially useful if the United States and its allies want to intervene militarily beginning with 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 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.

U.S. 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 involve drills on handling chemical strikes, which Syria's government and rebels have accused each other of carrying out.

The United States and Russia have been trying to bridge differences by pushing the warring sides to peace talks in Geneva, but divisions among the opposition and wrangling among the major powers over whether Assad must step down have left the prospects for the conference unclear.

Britain and France have broken ranks with other European powers and the United States to say they may join Saudi Arabia and Qatar in arming the rebels as a way to end a war that has killed over 80,000 people. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said on Sunday London was still "very reluctant" to do so.

"People have understandable concerns about the idea of sending arms to anybody in Syria," he said. "On the other hand, at the moment, people are being killed in huge numbers while the world denies them the right to defend themselves."

Israel, which has bombed what it suggests were Iranian missiles in Syria headed for Hezbollah, said on Sunday it aimed to stay out of the war, though it is concerned by fighting on the U.N.-policed ceasefire line in the Golan Heights that might bring Islamists toward its border.

"Israel is not getting involved in the civil war in Syria, as long as the fire is not directed at us," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet in broadcast remarks.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/09/us-syria-crisis-idUSBRE9580C220130609>

## 6. SYRIA

**'US close to OK on arming Syrian rebels' Opposition leaders' warning that rebellion could face devastating losses without greater support prompts the Obama administration to consider taking drastic action**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Moved by the Assad regime's rapid advance, the Obama administration could decide this week to approve lethal aid for the beleaguered Syrian rebels and will weigh the merits of a less likely move to send in U.S. airpower to enforce a no-fly zone over the civil war-wracked nation, officials said Sunday.

White House meetings are planned over the coming days, as Syrian President Bashar Assad's government forces are apparently poised for an attack on the key city of Homs, which could cut off Syria's armed opposition from the south of the country. As many as 5,000 Hezbollah fighters are now in Syria, officials believe, helping the regime press on

with its campaign after capturing the town of Qusair near the Lebanese border last week.

Opposition leaders have warned Washington that their rebellion could face devastating and irreversible losses without greater support, and the warnings are prompting the United States to consider drastic action.

Secretary of State John Kerry postponed a planned trip Monday to Israel and three other Mideast countries to participate in White House discussions, said officials who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

While nothing has been concretely decided, U.S. officials said President Barack Obama was leaning closer toward signing off on sending weapons to vetted, moderate rebel units. The U.S. has spoken of possibly arming the opposition in recent months but has been hesitant because it doesn't want to al-Qaida-linked and other extremists fighting alongside the anti-Assad militias to end up with the weapons.

Obama already has ruled out any intervention that would require U.S. military boots on the ground. Other options such as deploying American air power to ground the regime's jets, gunships and other aerial assets are now being more seriously debated, the officials said, while cautioning that a no-fly zone or any other action involving U.S. military deployments in Syria were far less likely right now.

The president also has declared chemical weapons use by the Assad regime a “red line” for more forceful U.S. action. American allies including France and Britain have say they’ve determined with near certitude that Syrian forces have used low levels of sarin in several attacks, but the administration is still studying the evidence. The U.S. officials said responses that will be mulled over in this week’s meetings concern the deteriorating situation on the ground in Syria, independent of final confirmation of possible chemical weapons use.

Any intervention could have wide-reaching ramifications for the United States and the region. It would bring the U.S. closer to a conflict that has killed almost 80,000 people since Assad cracked down on protesters inspired by the Arab Spring in March 2011 and sparked a war that has since been increasingly defined by sectarian clashes between the Sunni-led rebellion and Assad’s Alawite-dominated regime.

And it would essentially pit the United States alongside regional allies Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar in a proxy war against Iran, which is providing much of the materiel to the Syrian government’s counterinsurgency and, through Hezbollah, more and more of the manpower.

Syria’s precarious position in the heart of the Middle East makes the conflict extremely unpredictable. Lebanon, across the western border, suffered its own brutal civil war in the 1970s and the 1980s and is already experiencing increased interethnic tensions. Iraq, to Syria’s east, is mired in worsening violence. And Israel to the southwest has seen shots fired across the contested Golan Heights and has been forced to strike what it claimed

were advanced weapons convoys heading to Hezbollah, with whom it went to war with in 2006.

Iran could wreak havoc in the region through its support of Shiite militant groups, and U.S. officials fear Iran may seek to retaliate for any stepped-up American involvement by targeting Israel or U.S. interests in the region. It’s also unclear what American action would mean for relations with Russia, which has provided Assad with military and diplomatic support even as it claims that it working with the United States to try to organize a Syrian peace conference.

At the same time, it’s unclear how Washington could fundamentally change the trajectory of a conflict that has increasingly tilted toward Assad in recent months without providing weapons to the opposition forces or getting involved itself.

The administration has been studying for months how to rebalance Syria’s war so that moderate, pro-democracy rebels defeat the regime or make life so difficult for Assad and his supporters that the government decides it must join a peace process that entails a transition away from the Assad family’s four-decade dictatorship.

But Assad’s military successes appear to have rendered peace efforts largely meaningless in the short term. While Kerry and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov have been trying to rally support for the planned conference in Geneva — first envisioned for May and since postponed until July at the earliest — even America’s allies in the Syrian opposition leadership have questioned the wisdom of

sitting down for talks while they are ceding territory all over the country to Assad's forces.

Beyond weapons support for the rebels, administration officials harbor deep reservations about other options.

They note that a no-fly zone, championed by hawks in Congress such as Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., would require the U.S. to first neutralize Syrian air defense systems that have been reinforced with Russian technology and are far stronger than those that Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi had before the U.S. and its Arab and European allies helped rebels overthrow him in 2011. And unlike with Libya, Washington has no clear international mandate for authorizing any strikes inside Syria, a point the Obama administration officials has harped on since late 2011 to explain its reticence about more forceful action.

Homs has one of the biggest Alawite communities in Syria and is widely seen as pro-Assad. The rebels control the city center, however, with regime forces besieging them on the outskirts.

Many towns north of Homs also are rebel-controlled, while to the south Hezbollah-backed government forces have been clearing rebels from villages and towns. Fierce fighting there over the past three weeks has killed dozens of rebels, troops and Hezbollah fighters and wounded hundreds.

Seizing control of Homs would clear a path for the regime from Damascus to the Mediterranean coast, and firm up its grip on much of the country.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/us-close-to-ok-on-arming-syrian-rebels/>

### **Iran outmaneuvers U.S. in the Syrian proxy war**

Russia has yet to deliver to Syria S-300 air defense missiles, shown here on parade in Red Square in Moscow, saying it wishes to avoid tilting the balance of power in the region. But Russia has proved both steadfast and opportunist in its Middle East dealings with its regional allies, such as Iran.

Syria's uprising offered the possibility of a strategic defeat of Iran. In this scenario, Iran would be weakened by the collapse of Bashar Assad's regime, its single Arab ally and a vital link to Lebanon's Hezbollah militia. Isolated, Iran would become more vulnerable to international pressure to limit its nuclear program. And as Iran's regional influence faded, those of its rivals - U.S. allies Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia - would expand.

Instead, events in Syria are spinning in Iran's favor. Assad's regime is winning ground, the war has made Iran more comfortable in its nuclear pursuits, and Iran's gains have embarrassed U.S. allies that support the Syrian uprising. What's more, Iran has strengthened its relationship with Russia, which may prove to be the most important strategic consequence of the Syrian conflict, should the United States continue to sit it out.

Part of the U.S. calculation in declining to intervene has been the assumption that Assad would inevitably fall. The United States, apparently, did not consider the implications of leaving the door open to a comeback by Assad.

Reinforced by Hezbollah fighters and armed with Iranian and Russian weapons, the Syrian army broke through rebel lines in the central city of al-Qusair last week. Reports Wednesday say forces loyal to Assad have recaptured the town.

Syria is now a proxy war, the outcome of which will determine the regional pecking order. In the Mideast, aura of power decides strategic advantage. Hezbollah's prowess in Syria is a blow to Saudi Arabia, which has supported Hezbollah's political opponents in Lebanon. The Syrian army's gains are a setback to the Saudis, Qataris and Turks, all of whom have backed the rebels with money and weapons.

The United States has withheld lethal aid, not to mention military action. The Obama administration has eschewed intervention in Syria as a slippery slope to full-scale war, a costly repeat of the Iraq fiasco. In making this case, however, the administration sends a strong signal that it also would not go to war against Iran, despite President Barack Obama's statement that no option is off the table when it comes to stopping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. When U.S. officials say their options for intervention are constrained by Syria's air defense systems, they are also saying they fear Iran's.

If there was once a realistic hope that Syria's civil war would isolate Iran, that prospect has dimmed. Russia has assumed all along Assad could win, and thanks to Iran's support, that now looks like a realistic outcome. Having already absorbed the wrath of Arab public opinion for supporting the ruthless leader,

Russia has little reason to switch sides. By sticking with Assad, Russia projects the image of a steadfast ally that doesn't bend to international pressure, in contrast to the United States, which appears to want to wash its hands of the region and pivot away to Asia.

Russia's nominal support for international pressure on Iran's nuclear program notwithstanding, the two countries have long cooperated in the Caucasus and Central Asia to shape regional politics and minimize U.S. influence. Common ground on Syria is deepening their relationship. The longer the Syrian conflict draws out, the closer this alliance will grow.

Russia shares Iran's fear of the rising Sunni tide sweeping across the Arab world. This trend, Kremlin officials think, will fuel Islamic radicalism in Russia's Muslim regions. They see Syria through the prism of the war in Chechnya and fault Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia for supporting Sunni extremism first in the Caucasus and Central Asia and now in the Middle East. They see themselves fighting alongside Iran, against America's allies, in a war against Sunni radicals.

If successful in Syria, the Russian-Iranian bloc will seek greater influence in new areas, such as the Persian Gulf. It's worth noting that Russia invited Bahrain's Shiite opposition party, al-Wifaq, to visit Moscow in February.

The United States may be content to leave the Middle East and its troubles behind, but that feeling will be short-lived if the legacy of its Syria policy is a region dominated by an aggressive Russian-Iranian axis.

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<http://www.theday.com/article/20130609/OP03/306099968/-1/OP>

### **Barghouti: US not honest broker, peace deadlocked**

The US is not an honest broker and the peace talks with Israel have reached a deadlock, jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti was quoted as saying on Sunday.

Barghouti made his comments in a letter relayed by his lawyer to the Chinese news agency Xinhua.

Barghouti's comments seemed timed to come on the eve of US Secretary of State John Kerry's visit to the region – the fifth since he entered office – in a bid to revive stalled talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

However Kerry, who was expected to arrive on Tuesday, has postponed his trip. The State Department never formally announced when he would be coming back to the region, nor did the Prime Minister's Office officially announce that a meeting had been scheduled with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

Both Israeli and US officials indicated the delay was due to scheduling problems stemming from Netanyahu's twoday trip to Poland on Wednesday. No new date for a visit has been announced.

Last week, at an address to the American Jewish Committee in Washington, Kerry said that he has visited Israel "in March, April and May, and I will be back soon."

One Israeli official dismissed some speculation that the postponement had to do with any problems in Kerry's efforts to re-launch Israeli-Palestinian talks, saying that if there were a crisis, Kerry would definitely be coming to try and solve it.

Barghouti's statements are likely to embarrass Abbas and other PA leaders who have publicly supported Kerry's efforts to resume the peace negotiations.

"President Barack Obama has disappointed many in the world," said Barghouti, a member of the Fatah Central Committee who has been in prison since 2002 serving five life terms for his role in terror attacks on Israelis.

"Obama has failed in forcing Israel to abide by the requirements of the peace process. He has not shown a real desire until now in implementing resolutions of international legitimacy."

Barghouti claimed that Obama was responsible for blocking Palestinian attempts to gain full membership in the UN and its agencies and conventions.

Barghouti said that Obama and his administration have increased all forms of political and military aid to Israel.

He said that Kerry should ask Israel to "end occupation and establish a sovereign Palestinian state."

Barghouti said that Kerry must understand that Palestinians are not waiting for gestures from Israel, but are demanding their “sacred national rights.

Referring to Kerry’s plan to boost the Palestinian economy, Barghouti said that the Palestinians are opposed to “economic peace at the expense of their freedom, independence and the right of return” for Palestinian refugees to their former homes inside Israel.

Barghouti warned the PA leadership against returning to the negotiating table with Israel unconditionally, saying such a move would cause grave damage to the Palestinian national interests. He said that the PA leadership should return to the negotiations only if Israel committed to “ending occupation and withdrawing to the 1967 borders, establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital, releasing all Palestinian prisoners and ensuring the right of return of all refugees.”

Barghouti also rejected a proposal by the Arab League for land swaps between the Palestinians and Israel.

The proposal was made last month during a visit by Arab League foreign ministers to Washington.

The Arab League is not authorized to make any concessions, Barghouti stressed.

He also voiced support for “popular resistance” against Israel, arguing that the right-wing government in Israel was not interested in peace with the Palestinians.

“Negotiations with Israel would not bear any fruits in the absence of resistance on the ground,” Barghouti said.

“The negotiations have reached a deadlock due to the extremist Israeli position and the absence of an Israeli partner.”

In a related development, PA Foreign Minister Riad Malki warned that Israeli “intransigence” and refusal to halt settlement construction would sabotage Kerry’s efforts to revive the peace process.

PLO Secretary-General Yasser Abed Rabbo said that the Israeli government was not interested in reaching a peace agreement on the basis of a two-state solution.

He said the Israeli government was seeking to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state by creating new facts on the ground.

<http://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Barghouti-US-not-an-honest-broker-peace-talks-deadlocked-315972>

## **7.ARABIA& PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA**

### **Many injured in stampede at Indonesian consulate**

A stampede erupted yesterday among several thousand Indonesian women rushing into the Indonesian Consulate to finalize their travel documents, leaving at least three people severely injured and scores others suffering from bumps, bruises and sprains.

Details were sketchy late last night, but several women fainted and or had fallen sick. The injured received first aid by medical aid teams at consulate at the spot.

The three injured people were taken to hospitals by ambulance.

Several witnesses at the scene told Arab News that some women were killed, but Indonesian diplomatic sources denied the reports.

The women queued up on Al-Hamey Street and police blocked the road with barricades as motorists were jammed for long stretches along Muallafeen street.

All roads in Rehab district leading to Indonesian consulate were jampacked.

Indonesian ambassador to Kingdom and senior high-ranking officials are stationed in Jeddah to oversee the arrangements from Indonesian side to meet the July 3 deadline.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454458>

### **Service offices do brisk business**

A court in Detroit has dropped charges against Hussein Al-Kawaher, a 33-year-old Saudi citizen known as “the man with the pot,” but has demanded that he leave US territories.

James Haworth, Al-Kawaher’s lawyer, said: “He was notified to go to the Department of Customs and Border Protection to remove his name from the list of those arrested and go back to his country.”

Detroit general prosecutor office said Al-Kawaher did not give a rational explanation for the two missing pages of his passport and the pot found with his luggage. “This aroused the suspicion of authorities, compelling them to arrest.”

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454462>

### **2,000 distressed Pakistanis get job interviews**

The Pakistani Consulate recently arranged for 2,000 distressed workers to get job interviews with 40 companies.

The interviews, which took place Friday at the consulate until late in the evening, were for workers who need to regularize their status before the July 3 deadline.

Pakistan Consul General Aftab Khokhar said the initiative was only for those people who are illegal or work for companies in the Red Zone.

“My request and message to the people of the Pakistani community is that this job fair is only for those who are covered under the amnesty. So please, those who don’t fall into these categories should not come and give deserving people a chance,” said Khokhar.

The workers were interviewed for various jobs including drivers, engineers, electricians, general laborers, forklift operators supermarket workers, plumbers and technicians.

Khokhar said he would try to set aside another day for interviews. “We will try to organize it on a bigger scale if we get space,” he said.

Mohammed Idris, a worker who came for an interview, hopes to get a job. “The consul general promised to help us so we came and registered with the companies. The representatives of the companies took our iqama and passport numbers, phone numbers, names and other details and told us they would contact us very soon,” he said.

Another worker, Bagistan Khan, said he came to the Kingdom after July 2008 and cannot get a job or rectify his status.

Mazhar Khan, an engineer, said he works for a company in the Green Zone, but cannot get released from his sponsor. He said he had asked the consulate to help him, but was told he had to bring a permission letter from his sponsor.

“I wish someone can help me get released and transferred to another company before the grace period ends.”

He said many workers with the same problem had turned up for interviews and were “upset” when they were turned away.

Mohammed Al-Ghamdi, a representative of Al-Ghamdi company, said he found a number of skilled workers. “Many of our requirements for drivers and electricians are fulfilled. We will finalize whom we need in two or three days. Everything went smoothly, but one day is not enough for such initiatives,” he said.

Another company representative, Vaqar Rathore, said he also found workers his firm could hire and are preparing transfers.

Other company representatives also urged the consulate to set aside more time for interviews.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454461>

### **Kerala offers rehab package to returnees**

Kerala, a south Indian state that has deployed an estimated 750,000 workers in Saudi Arabia, is all set to launch a “broad rehabilitation package” for Indian expatriates returning from Saudi Arabia following the strict

implementation of the new Nitaqat labor policy. This was revealed by K.C. Joseph, minister for nonresident Keralite affairs, at a press conference here yesterday.

Joseph said: “The rehabilitation package for Keralite workers returning from Saudi Arabia would be rolled out soon.” Indian Ambassador Hamid Ali Rao, Deputy Chief of the Mission Sibi George and other senior Indian diplomats were present at the luncheon press briefing. Joseph also spoke about a pilot survey being conducted by his government to ascertain the number and the conditions of Keralites working overseas.

Minister Joseph, who holds additional portfolios of rural development, planning, culture and dairy development in the Kerala state government, held talks with Rao and met with a cross-section of workers here yesterday. He commended the role of the embassy and the way it handled the rush of the Nitaqat-affected workers. He said the “Riyadh-based Indian diplomatic mission has become a role model for our other missions abroad.”

The minister said the Saudi authorities must also be thanked for their “kind and humanitarian approach” to the issue. Saudi Arabia has given expat workers until July 3 to comply with the new obligations, with an amnesty on illegal workers until then. Asked to share features of the proposed rehabilitation package, he said the Kerala government is working on the modalities to launch the scheme.

India’s External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid, who held bilateral talks in Saudi Arabia recently, had urged all Indian states,

including Kerala, to come up with a viable rehabilitation scheme. He said the department of NORKA, the state government and some banks including State Bank of Travancore have come forward to offer the rehabilitation package.

Asked to explain the details of the state-funded survey for nonresident Keralites, Joseph said an online facility is in place to participate in the survey. “Also, a door-to-door survey to collect the basic details about NRKs in the state began last month,” said the minister, adding that the survey will be completed this month. He noted that his government is working on several infrastructure projects including a project to boost air links between the Gulf and Kerala.

“As the Congress-led United Democratic Front government in Kerala completed two years in office last month, the emphasis is now on the infrastructure sector, where the government hopes to make a palpable difference,” said Joseph. He further explained his government’s plans for the infrastructure sector, including the realization of two new airports, a metro rail project, an IT park and a major port in the state.

He said the proposed Vizhinjam port project in the southern tip of the state was expected to get environmental clearance soon. Two new airports have been the talk of the state which already boasts three international airports at Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi and Kozhikode. Joseph said the Kerala government was committed to both the proposed airports, at Aranmula and Kannur.

Meanwhile, the Indian Embassy announced a meeting of volunteers today (June 9) in the chancery premises at the Diplomatic Quarters.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454460>

### **Work is better than begging, say car-washing youngsters**

With temperatures on the rise, even animals seek shelter from the scorching heat. For some young Arab boys, this is not possible since they have to make a living. Heat or no heat, they have no choice but to clean the windshields of cars to earn money.

They do this to avoid begging although they are under the legal age to work.

Mohammed Ali Yamani, a Yemeni, told Arab News that he works day and night and earns between SR 50 to SR 100 every day by cleaning the windshields of cars when they stop at traffic signals.

He said that many drivers don’t allow them to touch their cars.

“We see in English movies that boys like us in western countries do the same work and get a lot of money. We are trying to earn some income, which is better than begging,” he said.

He said that they do not charge a fixed amount. “Sometimes, they give us just SR 2 to SR 3 and some give us more. Often if we clean the windshield without the driver’s permission, they don’t pay us,” he added.

These boys don’t use special windshield liquid but normal liquid soap, which costs very little.

Some motorists said that it is dangerous for them to be moving between car lanes amid traffic that can move sporadically.

“It is dangerous. In addition, the soap they use is not good for the car windshield, as it leave stains, but at least they are not begging, which is good,” said one driver.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454459>

### **BRJ brings significant difference to lives of thousands in the region**

Bab Rizq Jameel, an affiliate of Abdul Latif Jameel (ALJ) Group, has created nearly 400,000 job opportunities in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Turkey in 10 years, creating a significant difference in the lives of thousands in the region, said Ibrahim Badawood, managing director of ALJ Community Initiatives.

Addressing the opening session of a manpower-training program at the Islamic Development Bank, he described BRJ as a successful and profitable business venture. “BRJ is a self-sustaining venture. It can create many jobs and meet the needs of people,” he said.

BRJ has been a success and many organizations in the Kingdom and other parts of the Middle East have begun emulating the program. It has 36 branches in the Arab world and Turkey, with more than 700 full-time job creators.

Bab Rizq Jameel means “Beautiful gateway to prosperity” in Arabic, as it has proved since 2003.

IDB and Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) jointly organized the training program, which will continue through Wednesday.

Badawood urged the IDB and J-PAL team to explore prospects of cooperation in the vital area of job creation as it plays a significant role in accelerating social and economic development.

“BRJ would be interested to partner with IDB and J-PAL for a job creation research program in the Arab world and MENA region,” Badawood said.

He emphasized the importance of acting quickly in order to take advantage of the population bubble as an opportunity to create greater prosperity.

In his keynote speech, Badawood described unemployment as one of the most pressing problems in the Middle East. About 60 percent of population in the region is under 30 and MENA accounts for 25 percent of youth unemployment.

“Since 2003, ALJ Community Initiatives has launched numerous global and regional programs such as artistic and educational projects, job creation activities and poverty alleviation initiatives,” he said.

ALJCI already has a long history of providing scholarships for students at MIT and since 2006 has been associated with J-PAL as well. With ALJCI support, J-PAL work based on randomized evaluations has improved the daily lives of millions of people worldwide, he said.

Ahmed Tiktı, IDB's vice-president for cooperation and capacity development and Birema Sidibé, vice president for operations, attended the opening session.

Abhijit Banerjee, professor of Economics, MIT, and director, J-Pal Global; Dean Karlan, professor of economics, Yale University; Bruno Crepon, associate professor, ENSAE et École Polytechnique; and Karen Macours, associate professor of economics, PSE Ecole d'Économie de Paris will conduct the training.

Impact evaluation seeks to respond to the growing demand of donors and beneficiaries for measurable results of development interventions carried out by development banking institutions around the world.

The training is therefore in line with IDB's drive to improve the quality of its interventions and showcase results on the ground.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454453>

### **SWCC produces 955 mcm of desalinated water in a year**

The Saline Water Conversion Corporation (SWCC) produced 955 million cubic meters of desalinated water last year, an increase of 7.8 percent compared to the figures of the previous year according to an annual report released by SWCC.

Around 504 million cubic meters of desalinated water were produced by plants in the eastern coast of the Kingdom, equivalent to 52.8 percent of the total production capacity, where the share of western coast

plants stood at 47.2 percent, or 451 million cubic meters, the report said.

There were 10,153 SWCC employees in the fiscal year 2012-2013. Saudi nationals held 86.3 percent of the total posts, while the remaining 14 percent went to the expat contractual employees, it said.

A number of desalination projects are currently under implementation, including the Ras Al-Khair plant with a capacity of 1.025 million cubic meters per day (cmpd), phase three of the Jeddah plant based on the reverse osmosis system, with 240,000 cmpd, phase three of the Yanbu plant, with 550,000 cmpd and a series of water transportation projects across parts of the Kingdom.

Projects under bidding include five plants at Rabigh at phase three, with a capacity of 20,000 cmpd, Haql (phase three), Dhubaa (phase four), Wajh (phase four), each with a capacity of 9,000 cmpd and Rabigh (phase four) with 600,000 cmpd, the report said.

Total expenditure on SWCC projects exceeded SR 100.4 billion until the end of the 2012-2013 fiscal year, where operation and maintenance costs of the plant and its facilities stood at more than SR 42.3 billion, the report said.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454452>

### **Riyadh protests as murderer of Saudis escape from Niger jail**

Saudi Arabia has expressed its displeasure at the escape of a convicted murderer of four Saudis from a jail in the capital Niger recently.

The convict, Alassane Ould Mohamed, escaped in an operation suspected to have been carried out by a terrorist organization to which he belonged. The incident took place a week ago.

During the operation in which two prison guards were killed, 22 prisoners went missing, according to a statement from the Niger government.

The convict had been sentenced to a heavy fine and a 20-year jail term for the murder of four Saudis and an American, Al-Riyadh daily reported yesterday.

The Saudi Charge d’Affaires in Niger, Saad Al-Qahtani, met with the country's justice minister and other officials to register the Kingdom’s protest.

Saudi ambassador to the sub-Saharan country, Saud Al-Dayel, said authorities in Niger had assured him on an earlier occasion that the security of the prison was ensured with the deployment of tanks around it to ward off any possible prison break attempts. However, the latest developments showed there were either no such arrangements in place or a serious security lapse by authorities.

Al-Dayel said a committee under the supervision of the Saudi Foreign Ministry would soon visit Niger to monitor the situation and review developments.

Mohamed was sentenced in June last year for his involvement in a December 2009 attack on a group of tourists that left four Saudi men dead. Another Saudi man was permanently incapacitated in the attack that took place while they were performing Fajr prayer close to Niamey.

The Kingdom, which demanded capital punishment for the culprit, has been waiting for an appeal hearing in the case at a Niamey court in January.

While the Niger authorities claimed that the fugitive was still present in that country, several other sources indicated that he escaped to neighboring Mali.

Niger has emerged as a firm ally of France and the United States in the fight against Al-Qaeda-linked groups in the arid Sahel region.

Its army has deployed 650 troops in Mali to take part in a French-led war on armed groups who seized the northern two-thirds of the country last year.

<http://www.arabnews.com/news/454451>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN – PAKISTAN

### US Needs Iran, Turkey For Diplomatic Surge in Syria

The report recommends, “Negotiations must be inclusive, and must represent all facets of Syria’s cultural mosaic.”

Despite the urgency of the report, diplomacy in Syria is stalling, not surging. On June 5, Lakhdar Brahimi, joint special representative of the United Nations and the Arab League for Syria, said that the proposed Geneva Conference on Syria, to be held under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General with the United States and Russia playing critical roles, will not be held in June, as originally hoped, because Syrian opposition parties have not yet agreed to participate.

The National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, the main opposition

group, is conditioning its participation in the Geneva conference on the Free Syrian Army receiving more arms, and a halt to Iranian and Hezbollah support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces.

The opposition was further set back by the fall of Qusair last week to Syrian government forces.

Ali Hashem provided an exclusive eyewitness account after the victory of Syrian government troops in Qusair, describing a city "in rubble."

"Nothing here indicates that life will go back to normal soon," Hashem writes for Al-Monitor. "There is no sign of civilians except a few dozen who returned to check on their homes and some civil workers who were sent to the city to inspect its needs 24 hours after its fall."

The National Coalition's position comes as Assad himself has agreed to his government's participation in the Geneva conference, as analyzed by Geoffrey Aronson. The National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change in Syria, representing what is known as the internal opposition, has also signaled its willingness to attend, as Haytham Mouzahem reports for Al-Monitor.

As this column has argued time and again, more arms to the rebels means more killing, more refugees, more tragedy, and more terrorist influence in Syria. The scale of arms and 'training' required to defeat Assad's forces is beyond what is being discussed, and has every chance of leading to a type of mission creep and unforeseen consequences that any casual reading of the US experiences in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan might offer.

The "Assad must go" and "do something" impulses and mantras, however understandable and well intentioned, should not distract from the overriding US interest in ending the conflict, rather than taking sides and prolonging it.

Despite Arizona Sen. John McCain's call again last week for arms to the rebels and US enforcement of a no-fly zone in Syria, as well as legislation such as the Syria Transition Support Act, which was reported favorably out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on May 21, Congressman Peter King, Republican of New York and chairman of the House Homeland Security Sub-Committee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, told Al-Monitor that he opposes US arms to Syrian rebel forces because of the growing influence of Jabhat al-Nusra and al-Qaeda affiliates among them.

"I really don't sense much support," King said. "I can't think of anyone that has come up to me and has had the same fervor as John McCain has, and has said we have to do something."

King's view is similar to that of Rep. Christopher Van Hollen, ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee, who warned of "unintended consequences" for providing arms to Syria's rebels in an interview with Al-Monitor last month.

It is worth recalling that in 1821, then-US Secretary of State (and future president) John Quincy Adams told the House of Representatives that America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy."

Instead of seeking another monster to destroy by arming the rebels against Assad and his backers, the US should intensify its efforts to end the monster that is the war in Syria through a diplomatic surge that could include the following:

First, the US should give up its hesitance about Iran's role at the Geneva conference on Syria and join Russia and the UN to extend an invitation immediately. Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazaei, told Al-Monitor that Tehran welcomed the Geneva conference. There is no other country, including Russia, which has Iran's influence with Assad. Iran has made an offer to talk with the US and its allies about Syria. It is time to take up the offer.

Second, the protests against Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, covered by Turkey Pulse, further complicate Turkey's role in Syria, which is widely unpopular. In this crisis there may be an opportunity. Erdogan has compromised Turkey's natural role as a bridge between east and west by becoming a partisan in the region's sectarian war, with both its rhetoric and support for the opposition. The role of bridge was well-served when Ankara brokered the Tehran Declaration in 2010, provided a trusted back channel between Israel and Syria and promoted regional integration as part of its "good neighbor" policy. Erdogan's populist, sectarian tack since then has magnified his troubles at home. A shift back by Turkey might also soothe its ties with Russia, whose approach to Syria also reveals an element of support for Christian orthodoxy, as the Christian communities are under siege in Syria as well.

Third, the US should increase the pressure on Qatar and Saudi Arabia to exert their own influence on Syrian opposition forces for a cease fire. Doha and Riyadh are partisans in this war and backers of not only the National Coalition and the Free Syrian Army, but also, whether directly or indirectly, of the Islamist groups who are waging jihad against Assad's regime in Syria — groups who are linked to those same terrorists who are on a killing spree in Iraq, and who are avowed and proven enemies of the United States.

Here is an idea: at Geneva, or even before, US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov should escort Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi and Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu into a quiet room, close the door, and agree on ending a war that has gone on too long.

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/06/us-iran-syria-diplomatic-surge.html#ixzz2WkqBqO7J>

### **Syria forces ready Aleppo assault after Qusayr victory**

Syrian troops buoyed by victory in Qusayr were preparing Sunday to launch a northern offensive, a security source said, as the conflict came to the streets of Beirut where a demonstrator was killed.

At a protest outside the Iranian embassy against the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah's direct involvement in the Syrian conflict, a man was shot and fatally wounded in the first such shooting in Beirut linked to the 26-month war.

A Syrian security source told AFP that after its capture from rebel forces of the strategic region of Qusayr on the border with Lebanon with the support of Hezbollah fighters, the regime's next target was Aleppo province in the north.

"It is likely the battle for Aleppo will start in the coming hours or days, and its aim is to reclaim the towns and villages in the province," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"The Syrian Arab army is ready to carry out its mission in this province."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported the regime was deploying "thousands of soldiers" in the Aleppo region, aiming to recapture rebel posts and sever supply routes from neighboring Turkey.

On the international front, Britain said Syrian government gains on the ground had made organizing peace talks harder, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed Syria's conflict by telephone.

The announcement of a potential new offensive comes five days after the army expelled rebels from Qusayr in central-west Syria.

Syrians were shown on Sunday firing into the air and waving portraits of President Bashar al-Assad in Qusayr to celebrate the government's victory, in footage broadcast by Hezbollah's Al-Manar television.

Syrian daily Al-Watan said the army has "started to deploy at a large scale in Aleppo province, in preparation for a battle that will be fought in the city and its outskirts."

Rebels last July launched a massive assault on Aleppo, once Syria's commercial hub. The city has since suffered daily regime bombardment and clashes.

Al-Watan also said "the Syrian army will take advantage of its experience in Qusayr and Eastern Ghouta (near Damascus) to advance in the (central) province of Hama and Homs" nearby.

In Beirut, a security official said a man was shot in the back and fatally wounded outside Iran's embassy during a demonstration against the Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

It was not known who fired the deadly shot.

Around 100 people also staged an anti-Hezbollah protest in central Beirut amid a heavy security presence, an AFP journalist said.

The Lebanese Red Cross, meanwhile, said dozens of people wounded in Qusayr have been brought across the border for treatment.

"Eighty-seven wounded Syrians were transported by the Lebanese Red Cross from Friday afternoon to Sunday morning to hospitals in Bekaa (east) and to north" in Lebanon, said Georges Kettane, operations director of the LRC.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said Syrian regime gains made it harder to organize a US-Russian proposed peace conference.

“The regime has gained ground on the ground, again at the cost of huge loss of life and the indiscriminate use of violence against the civilian population,” he told BBC television.

“That makes the Geneva conference harder to bring about and to make a success.”

Syria’s main opposition coalition on Saturday reiterated that it refuses to join the peace talks dubbed Geneva 2.

“What is happening in Syria today completely closes the doors on any discussions about international conferences and political initiatives,”

George Sabra, interim head of the National Coalition, told reporters in Istanbul.

In Jerusalem, the premier’s office said Netanyahu had spoken to Putin after Russia offered to bolster the beleaguered UN peacekeeping force monitoring the Israeli-Syrian ceasefire line on the Golan Heights.

“We discussed issues linked to Syria where the situation is becoming more complex by the day,” Netanyahu said.

“We saw only last week the battles which took place next to our border on the Golan,” he said after Syrian rebels clashed with Assad forces for control of Quneitra in the demilitarized zone.

Thursday’s clashes, in which two UN peacekeepers were lightly wounded, prompted Austria to announce it would withdraw its 377 troops from the UN Disengagement Observer Force.

On Sunday, the Syria conflict also spilled over into Iraq, where a guard was killed and two were wounded in clashes with Syrian rebels near a border crossing.

The Syrian Observatory, meanwhile, said Islamist rebels fighting the regime shot dead a 15-year-old in front of his parents and siblings on Sunday in Aleppo after accusing him of blasphemy.

More than 94,000 people have been killed and some 1.6 million Syrians have fled the country since March 2011 after Assad cracked down on pro-democracy protests, the watchdog estimates.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2013/06/09/Syria-forces-ready-Aleppo-assault-after-Qusayr-victory-.html>

### **Ahmadinejad passes the buck on nuclear approach**

London, Asharq Al-Awsat—Outgoing president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has reacted to a series of revelations about his destructive impact on Iran’s nuclear file by stressing that he is not responsible for this approach, according to the ISNA news agency.

Ahmadinejad’s quick response to the criticisms leveled at him during the third and final live presidential debate on Friday can be seen as shifting the blame towards the supreme guide, Ayatollah Khamenei.

In the last televised debate between presidential candidates, former chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rouhani and former foreign

minister Ali Akbar Velayati lambasted Ahmadinejad's government track record and attitude towards Iran's nuclear file.

Velayati revealed that his authorized efforts to strike a deal with then-French president Nicolas Sarkozy were sabotaged by "a senior government official" who had previously granted his consent, before and during negotiations with the French president.

Although Velayati did not mention Ahmadinejad by name, it was clear that this was a tacit reference to the outgoing president.

Less than 24 hours after the debate, Ahmadinejad rebuffed the criticisms leveled at him as being irrelevant, saying he had never been in charge of the nuclear negotiations and that this issue did not fall under his purview, in an implicit reference to Supreme Guide Ayatollah Khamenei who holds supreme power in Iran.

No decision can be made regarding Iran's nuclear file without Ayatollah Khamenei's approval.

Friday's live television debate focused on political topics. The debate had initially been expected to focus on domestic and factional politics, but the talk mainly focused on the

current administration's flawed handling of Iran's nuclear negotiations.

Ahmadinejad and his negative influence on the nuclear negotiations became the focal point of the debate, placing Rouhani and Velayati in the same camp in terms of rejecting the performance of Ahmadinejad, and, more importantly, their electoral rival, Saeed Jalili.

The harsh economic conditions being faced by the majority of the population and the suppressive political environment for activists and university students were expected to be the focal point of the debate, not the nuclear issue.

This open discussion of the contentious nuclear issue, which had previously been viewed as a sacrosanct symbol of national pride over the past decade, represents an important shift and hints at a possible new approach in future negotiations.

Saeed Jalili, who has taken a leave of absence from his position as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator to run in the Iranian presidential elections, was cornered not only by reformist and moderate candidates Rouhani and Mohammad Reza Aref but also conservative candidates Velayati and Mohsen Rezaei.

This accord between the moderate/reformist camp and the conservative faction over the failures of Iran's nuclear strategy can be seen as a softening in the supreme leader's stance.

It appears that Saeed Jalili, a hardliner presidential candidate who joined the race at the last minute expecting a boost from his nuclear credentials, could find himself in an awkward situation of changing Iran's nuclear approach if he is elected.

This is a negative sign for Jalili, whose candidacy is being viewed by many middle-class voters as a continuation of current nuclear policies, which in turn may encourage disenchanted voters to go to the polls to counteract his guaranteed hardline vote.

At the same time, Jalili's approach and policies are being openly condemned by other candidates, including Velayati—who is very close to Ayatollah Khamenei—demonstrating two things. One is a limited, but significant, thawing of Iran's entrenched nuclear stance. The other is that this could see Jalili being used as a catalyst to attract anti-status quo voters to turn up to the polls.

For Ayatollah Khamenei, securing maximum participation in the forthcoming June 14 election is much more important than the velocity at which the centrifuges in the Natanz or Fardo nuclear plants spin.

#### **Roadside bombs kill two soldiers in Pakistan**

Peshawar: Two roadside bombs killed two soldiers in a restive northwestern region of Pakistan on Sunday while a gun attack in the country's south killed two more, officials said.

Two intelligence officials said three soldiers sweeping the road ahead of a military convoy on the road between the towns of Miran Shah and Razmak in North Waziristan were hit Sunday by a bomb planted near an intersection. Two died and one was wounded. They spoke anonymously because they weren't authorized to speak to media.

The same officials reported a second blast on the Mir Ali-Miran Shah road near a checkpoint, but that wounded only one soldier.

The Pakistani army recently carried out several offensives in tribal regions along the Afghan border but is reluctant to conduct a massive sweep of the militant stronghold of North Waziristan, despite the US urging it to do so.

Also on Sunday, four gunmen riding on motorcycles opened fire on a police patrol in the southern city of Karachi, killing two officers and wounding a third one, said Usman Bajwa, a senior police officer.

Bajwa said the police patrol had deployed in a central neighborhood of Karachi, the country's main commercial hub, where two political

workers were similarly gunned down by armed motorcycle riders yesterday.

He said the gunmen fired 15 shots from their pistols into a police vehicle, killing two officers and leaving a third struggling for his life.

The police officer said seven people were gunned down, including a police officer and two political workers, in different incidents in the city yesterday. He said the attacks appeared part of a "plot" to destabilize Karachi.

The volatile megacity frequently witnesses deadly shootings linked to a range of groups, including Islamic militants, political parties, crime gangs, rival ethnic groups, and others.

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/roadside-bombs-kill-two-soldiers-in-pakistan-377273>