



# MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

## GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

**Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries**

Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset

**The Restructuring Procces of Iraq**

Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci

**Energy Security**

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**25 OCTOBER 2013**

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Gul receives Zebari, affirms that Turkey stands at same distance from all Iraqi forces**



Turkey's President, Abdullah Gul, received on Thursday evening, Oct. 24, Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, and the delegation accompanying him, discussing the relations between Iraq and Turkey, and means to develop them, as well as the situation in the area.

A statement to the press issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Gul considered Zebari's visit important toward developing the relations between the two countries in all fields; he expressed hope that Iraq would become stable and its political process be successful; asserting that his country stands at equal distance from all Iraqi forces, ethnics and sects.

For his part, Zebari stressed that his visit represents a message of friendship and cooperation from the Government and people of Iraq, aims to normalize bilateral relations and to expand and develop them in all field.

Zebari requested the Turkish President for his country's active participation in supporting Iraq, its democracy and to help stabilize it and its security.

The statement pointed out that the two stressed the necessity for cooperation between the countries of the area so peace and stability prevail in all its countries, as well as to reach peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.

Foreign Minister, Zebari, arrived of Thursday in Turkey, heading an official delegation, on the invitation of his Turkish counterpart, Ahmet Davutoglu. He is expected to meet with Turkey's Prime Minister, Speaker of Parliament and to hold talks with Davutoglu.

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

- **Maliki receives the President's Senior Advisor, enquires about Talabani's health**

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

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki received on Thursday, Oct. 24, the President's Senior Advisor, Dr. Abdul Lateef Jamal Rasheed.

A statement issued by the Presidency's Office said that Maliki enquired about President Talabani's health; who is undergoing medical treatment in Germany. The advisor affirmed that President Talabani's health is improving and the Iraqi people will be informed of the improvement.

It added that the Prime Minister expressed his wishes for Talabani a quick recovery and to return home soon.

Dr. Abdul Lateef Jamal Rasheed, gave a brief on Kurdistan Region's recent Parliamentary elections and their results.

For his part, Maliki said that elections are another step toward consolidate democracy and a factor to strengthen security and stability, to enable authorities provide service and development in Iraq.

- **Iqbal denounces assassinating cameraman in Nineveh**



MP Mohammed Iqbal of Motahidon Alliance denounced the assassination crime of the cameraman of the Musilliya Satellite Channel.

In a statement received by AIN, MP Iqbal said "I express my deep condolence for the family of the martyr Bashar Abdul Qadir who was assassinated in nabi Sheet area in Nineveh province."

He stressed the necessity of "following up the criminals and submit them for justice since negligence in this issue will open the road for the terrorists to accomplish their plot against Iraq and Iraqis."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43300:iqbal-denounces-assassinating-cameraman-in-nineveh-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43300:iqbal-denounces-assassinating-cameraman-in-nineveh-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)



- **Parliament adjourns voting on infrastructure law to Monday.**

Parliament adjourned voting on infrastructure law to next Monday which was figured on today's session that earlier held today due to lack of quorum.

MP for Ahrar parliamentary bloc said to NINA : " The vote on infrastructures law was postponed for lack of a quorum so it was to adjourn the meeting to next Monday.

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

- **Official urges to secure salaries of Peshmerga forces**

The Ministry of Peshmerga within Kurdistan Regional Government announced that the Federal Government did not send the funds of Peshmerga forces to Kurdistan Region till now.

The Ministry of Peshmerga quoted the official spokesperson of Peshmerga General Command, Lieutenant General Jabar al-Yawer, as saying "The KRG is expected to secure the budget of Peshmerga forces like previous years since the disbursement of Peshmerga salaries was only mentioned in an item within the law project of the Iraqi State budget."

"There are not any changes or new agreements regarding the salaries of Peshmerga forces between KRG and the Federal Government," stressing that "The Kurdistan Regional Government will provide securing the salaries of Peshmerga forces like pervious years," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43302:official-urges-to-secure-salaries-of-peshmerga-forces&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43302:official-urges-to-secure-salaries-of-peshmerga-forces&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **Motahidon Alliance concerned of security deterioration in Diyala**



- **Brussels host the meetings of the joint Iraq - European committees.**

In Brussels held today meetings of sub - committees of energy and Trade which was formed according to the partnership agreement between Iraq and the European Union.

According to a Foreign Ministry statement today , the Iraqi delegation included representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs , electricity, oil , finance, health , industry, minerals , agriculture, tourism and antiquities , science and technology in addition to the Central Bank , while the EU delegation included representatives of the external work management , trade , development , tax and customs and health."

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

Motahidon Alliance considered the arousing chaos and security breaches in the Iraqi provinces as an attempt to hinder development process and promoting the chaotic situation in Iraq.

Motahidon Alliance reported in a statement received by AIN that "The Alliance has concerns over the deterioration in security situation in Diyala province since there are always terrorist operations in each day targeting popular markets and mosques which raise the questioning about the reasons for targeting this area in particular."

"The Head of Motahidon Alliance, Osama al-Nijaifi, is closely observing the general events and exerting his best efforts to eliminate the suffering of Iraqi people in an attempt to preserve lives of people," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43295:motahidon-alliance-concerned-of-security-deterioration-in-diyala&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43295:motahidon-alliance-concerned-of-security-deterioration-in-diyala&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **Cameraman killed in Mosul after an hour of Protect Journalists seminar**



An official security source said on Thursday, that a cameraman working in one of the TV stations in the northern city of Mosul was killed by unknown gunmen.

“Unidentified gunmen killed with silencer guns this afternoon, Bashar al- Nuaimi , a television cameraman working in Museliya TV station near his home in Nabi Sheet area in Mosul city ,” the source told “Shafaq News”.

The attack comes after about an hour of a seminar held between Nineveh Operations Command with the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate as they discussed the protection of journalists in the city.

Three journalists were already killed by gunmen attack a few days ago.

Armed groups usually target journalists working in local and foreign institutions.

[http://www.shafaq.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7676:cameraman-killed-in-mosul-after-an-hour-of-protect-journalists-seminar-&catid=50:security&Itemid=76](http://www.shafaq.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7676:cameraman-killed-in-mosul-after-an-hour-of-protect-journalists-seminar-&catid=50:security&Itemid=76)

- **Car bomb goes off in Baquba, Diyala province**

A car bomb exploded on Thursday afternoon, 24, Oct north of Baquba, Diyala province.

A security source told the reporter of the National Iraqi News Agency / NINA / A car bomb, was parked near a shop in the industrial area in the district of Khalis, exploded north of Baquba, killing and injuring a number of civilians.

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



- **10 terrorists arrested in Mosul**



Security forces in Nineveh province arrested on Thursday 10 wanted men in accordance with Article IV of terrorism , seized explosives and destroyed boats to transfer explosives southern Mosul city , according to a police source.

“The Police Directorate of Nineveh province in collaboration with the Directorate of Intelligence and the Federal Investigation in the province carried out before noon today , proactive process against armed elements located in Hamam al-Aleel and Namroud sub-districts southern Mosul,” the source told “Shafaq News”.

Mosul city , the center of Nineveh province (about 402 km north of Baghdad) suffer from the spread of armed groups that carry out various operations such as murder , bombing and kidnapping in addition to collect of "royalties " from

traders and rich people to support their elements.

<http://www.shafaq.com/en/security/7673-10-terrorists-arrested-in-mosul.html>

- **Nijaifi to make contacts with political blocs to settle disputes regarding elections law**



The Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament announced making contacts with the political leaders in order to settle all disputes related to elections law.

The Media Directorate of the Parliament reported in a statement received by AIN "Nijaifi chaired a meeting in the constitutional hall that was attended by chairmen and representatives of parliamentary blocs in which they discussed the latest results of the dialogues and discussions regarding the parliamentary elections law."

"The political blocs failed to reach a settlement during the past days due to the existence of objections and reservations," the statement added, stressing that "The political blocs should commit to the date that was allocated to reach a settlement regarding elections law."

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43284:nijaifi-to-make-contacts-with-political-blocs-to-settle-disputes-regarding-elections-law&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43284:nijaifi-to-make-contacts-with-political-blocs-to-settle-disputes-regarding-elections-law&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **23 Military, police men killed wounded in suicide attack on the headquarters of Niniveh Operations Command**

23 Members of the military and police killed and wounded in a suicide attack on Thursday evening, Oct. 24, against Niniveh Operations Command in central Mosul, Niniveh province.

Police source told NINA that two suicide attackers detonated their explosive vests at the entrance of Niniveh Operations Command, followed by the explosion of

two car bombs, killing and wounding 23 military and police men.

He added that security forces surrounded that area, after receiving information that there are other suicide attackers in the vicinity.

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

- **Iraq, Australia to sign comprehensive MoU in various sectors**



Iraq and Australia are about to sign a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding instead of the sixth Mouse in the security, energy and Education sectors.

A statement by the Trade Ministry received by AIN cited "The Director of the Economic Relations Department within the MoT, Hashim Mohammed Hatem received the Australian Ambassador to Iraq and discuss the mutual relations with her."

"The two sides agreed upon singing a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding instead of the sixth MoUs in the security, energy and Education sectors," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43279:iraq-australia-to-sign-comprehensive-mou-in-various-sectors-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43279:iraq-australia-to-sign-comprehensive-mou-in-various-sectors-&catid=35:political&Itemid=2)

- **10 Civilians killed, wounded in Mada'in**

Two civilians killed and eight others wounded on Thursday evening, Oct. 24, when an improvised explosive device went off near an outdoor café in Mada'in area, southern Baghdad.

Security source said that police surrounded the area, while ambulances rushed to take casualties to nearby hospitals.

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

- **Najaf announces success of Eid al-Ghadier security plan**



The security committee in Najaf Provincial Council announced the success of the security plan dedicated for Eid al-Ghadier in Najaf province.

The Head of Security Committee in Najaf PC, Khalid al-Gashmai, declared in a statement received by AIN "There were no security breaches occurred during conducting rituals of Eid al-Ghadier," noting that "The implementation of the security plan was accompanied by some traffic jams in the roads that the people walked on heading towards Najaf province to commemorate rituals of Eid al-Ghadier."

Najaf province developed a security plan on the occasion of Eid al-Ghadier, with the participation of (30,000) security elements, while Najaf Provincial Council allocated IQD (100) million for this occasion in particular.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43301:najaf-announces-success-of-eid-al-ghadier-security-plan&catid=36:security&Itemid=37](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43301:najaf-announces-success-of-eid-al-ghadier-security-plan&catid=36:security&Itemid=37)



- **5 Civilians killed, wounded in northeastern Baghdad**

One civilian killed and four others wounded when an improvised explosive device emplaced on the road side in Husseinia area, northeastern Baghdad, went off.

Police source said that ambulances rushed to the area to take the casualties to hospital.

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

- **Mol confirms protecting Sa'adon tribal of southern Iraq**

The Ministry of Interior confirmed that the precautionary security procedures are still continuous to provide protection for Sa'adon tribal in the southern part of Iraq.

The Ministry of Interior declared in a statement received by AIN "Targeting Sa'adon tribal was a plot that some countries contributed in to arouse sectarian sedition among Iraqi components, but the awareness of the Iraqi people and their keenness in peaceful living foiled the plans of terrorist groups who are attempting to disturb security and stability in Iraq."

The people affiliated to Sa'adon tribal suffered displacement wave from their provinces in Basra and Dhi-Qar which aroused disagreement among them.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43282:moi-confirms-protecting-saadon-tribal&catid=36:security&Itemid=37](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43282:moi-confirms-protecting-saadon-tribal&catid=36:security&Itemid=37)

- **MoD : terrorism practices mass massacre in Anbar**



The Acting Minister of Defense, Saadon al-Duliami, considered the recent violent events in Iraq as a mass massacre.

Duliami mentioned in a speech that he delivered during a conference held by Anbar Provincial Council attended by the correspondent of AIN on Thursday "The current violent events in Iraq is a mass massacre carried out by foreign agendas thus we should eliminate terrorism shelters in Anbar province."

"Duliami demanded the chieftains, who became affiliated to terrorism, to rejoin the national sides considering the violent events occurred in Anbar during (2005, 2006) when Qaeda interfered in the internal affairs of the families under the pretext of spreading their poisoned thoughts," he concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43306:mod-terrorism-practices-mass-massacre-in-anbar&catid=36:security&Itemid=37](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43306:mod-terrorism-practices-mass-massacre-in-anbar&catid=36:security&Itemid=37)

- **Sales of dollar by CBI rise on Thursday auction.**

Sales of dollar by the Central Bank of Iraq CBI and purchases of other foreign currencies rose on Thursday auction to 166 million and 881 thousand dollars, after hitting yesterday 163 million and 229 thousand dollars, with a stable exchange rate of 1,166 dinars per dollar.

The daily bulletin issued by the Central Bank said : "The demand for dollar was ranging on today's auction around the level of 47 million and 925 thousand dollars which sold in cash.

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

- **MP attributes rise of prices of vegetables to lack of strategy for protecting local products**



Baghdad (AIN) –MP, Habeeb al-Turfi, attributed the rise of the process of the vegetables to the lack of the strategy of protecting the local products.

Speaking to All Iraq News Agency (AIN), he said "The borders of Iraq are opened to the importation of the agricultural products which resulted in damaging the local agricultural products."

"The variety of the imported products resulted in reducing the prices, but the imported products are limited which resulted in the rise of the process and this is a dangerous issue that needs to have a correct protection to the local products to settle it," he concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43268:mp-attributes-rise-of-prices-of-](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43268:mp-attributes-rise-of-prices-of-vegetables-to-lack-of-strategy-for-protecting-local-products-&catid=37:economy&Itemid=41)

[vegetables-to-lack-of-strategy-for-protecting-local-products-&catid=37:economy&Itemid=41](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43267:new-dam-to-be-constructed-in-maysan)

- **New dam to be constructed in Maysan**



Maysan (AIN) –The Iraqi Water Resources Ministry announced constructing Diwairij Dam in Maysan province.

A statement by the Ministry received by AIN cited "The Dam lies southeastern Ammara city where it in length of 510 M, height 9.5 M and the storage capacity is 1, 78 Million M3."

"The cost of the project is 11,370 Billion IQD," the statement concluded.

[http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=43267:new-dam-to-be-constructed-in-](http://www.alliraqnews.com/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=43267:new-dam-to-be-constructed-in-maysan)

[maysan-&catid=39:genral-  
news&Itemid=48](#)

## 2. SYRIA

- **Syria chemical disarmament on track but peace talks in doubt**



Syria is set to hand over a detailed plan for the destruction of its chemical arsenal by Thursday, days ahead of a UN deadline, the international watchdog said.

But prospects for a peace conference, which the world body is trying to convene in parallel with the disarmament process, looked dim after key opposition leaders spurned efforts by Western and Arab powers to persuade them to attend.

And on the ground violence raged unabated, with a rebel attack on a gas

pipeline causing power outages across Syria and a deadly car bombing and shelling hitting Damascus.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said on Wednesday that the Syrian government was expected to hand over its disarmament plan within the next 24 hours.

The plan is the next step for Damascus under the terms of a US-Russian deal to head off military strikes on Syria which calls for all its chemical weapons and production facilities to be destroyed by mid-2014.

"We expect Syria's initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme within the next 24 hours,

" spokesman Michael Luhan told reporters in The Hague, where the OPCW is based.

President Bashar al-Assad's regime has already handed over an inventory of its chemicals, weapons and facilities, and a joint UN-OPCW team has been in Syria since the start of the month inspecting and destroying them.

The team has now checked 18 of 23 declared sites in Syria, destroying production equipment at almost all of them, Luhan said.

But parallel efforts by the United Nations to convene a peace conference in Geneva next month have run into resistance from the opposition, who are insisting on a raft of preconditions.

Leaders of the National Coalition -- the main opposition umbrella group -- insisted they will not attend unless regime change and Assad's departure are on the table.

A meeting in London Tuesday between opposition leaders and 11 governments from the Friends of Syria group produced little more than a joint statement that Assad should play no future role in government.

Damascus retorted on Wednesday that no foreign party could be involved in deciding the country's leadership.

"The Syrian people will not allow any foreign party to impose itself ... in choosing a government, or in determining its powers and tasks," the foreign ministry said.

It said the government was ready to attend the planned Geneva conference to "try its best to ensure its success without any preconditions or any foreign intervention."

'No negotiations if Assad departure not on table'

The opposition is due to meet at the start of November to finalise its position on the Geneva talks.

But Coalition head Ahmad Jarba showed no signs of readiness to compromise.

"The only thing we are willing to negotiate is a transfer of all power and then the departure of the mass killer (Assad)," he said.

On the ground, rebels shelled two of Damascus's main squares on killing five people and wounding at least 22, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A car bomb hit a checkpoint in a western suburb of Damascus, causing multiple casualties among the troops manning it, the Observatory said.



And an attack by rebels near the capital caused a power outage across Syria, state news agency SANA quoted Electricity Minister Emad Khamis as saying.

An AFP journalist in Damascus said he could see from a distance a huge fire blazing near Damascus International Airport, which is located near the affected power station.

He also confirmed power was out in the capital.

The Observatory reported outages in several areas, including Aleppo in the north and Homs in the centre.

"It is likely this was a large-scale operation planned well in advance," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.

In September, a similar outage was caused after a high voltage power line was sabotaged.

<http://www.nst.com.my/world/syria-chemical-disarmament-on-track-but-peace-talks-in-doubt-1.383742>

- **Assad army scores new victory in southeast of Damascus**



Military operation is part of larger effort to close in on Eastern Ghouta, ring of suburbs besieged by government troops for months.

Syrian troops captured a key town southeast of Damascus on Thursday, a military source said, as they sought to "tighten the noose" around suburbs struck by chemical weapons in August.

The Syrian opposition meanwhile said it would meet on November 9 to decide whether to attend a Geneva peace conference that the United Nations is trying to convene in parallel with chemical disarmament efforts.

Syria is set to hand over a detailed plan for destroying its chemical arsenal Thursday, part of a UN-backed disarmament bid that averted US military strikes after the

August 21 sarin gas attack, which killed hundreds of people.

A military source said troops had recaptured Hteitit al-Turkman, describing it as an "important centre for the terrorists," the regime's term for the rebels who rose up against it in 2011.

The operation was part of a larger effort to close in on Eastern Ghouta, a ring of suburbs besieged by government troops for months, which were targeted in the August chemical attack.

Damascus has denied US allegations it carried out the attack.

Syrian authorities were meanwhile working to restore power after rebels attacked a gas pipeline Wednesday, causing blackouts across the country and setting off a huge fire near the airport, where a key power plant is located.

Electricity Minister Emad Khamis said Thursday that the fire had been extinguished and that power was being "gradually" restored to some provinces, according to the official SANA news agency.

Elsewhere in Syria, Kurdish fighters battled with jihadists for several hours as they advanced on a border crossing with Iraq held by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an Al-Qaeda affiliate that operates in both countries.

And in the central city of Homs a car bomb killed at least one person and wounded 43, state television reported.

Some 115,000 people have been killed and millions driven from their homes since a brutal crackdown on Arab Spring-inspired protests in the spring of 2011 set off a full-scale civil war.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said Syria was expected to hand over its disarmament plan by Thursday, the latest step in a US-Russian accord which calls for all Syria's chemical weapons and production facilities to be destroyed by mid-2014.

A joint UN-OPCW team, in Syria since the start of the month, has inspected 18 of 23 declared sites, destroying production equipment in almost all of them.

Sweden said Thursday it would aid the disarmament effort by providing an air

force unit and a Lockheed C-130 military transport plane, to be based in Cyprus.

But parallel efforts by the United Nations to convene a peace conference in Geneva next month have run into resistance from the fractured opposition, which is insisting on a raft of preconditions.

Leaders of the National Coalition -- the main opposition umbrella group -- have insisted they will not attend unless regime change and Assad's departure are on the table.

A meeting in London Tuesday between opposition leaders and diplomats from the Friends of Syria group produced little more than a joint statement that Assad should play no future role in government.

But behind the scenes Wednesday US ambassador to Syria Robert Ford, who has built up a close relationship with opposition leaders, met with key figures in Istanbul seeking to coax them to the negotiating table.

"Their participation is pivotal. We will continue encouraging them to attend, and that's why Ambassador Ford's on the ground talking to them right now in

Istanbul," said deputy State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf.

A member of the National Coalition confirmed the US-led effort to convince the group to attend the Geneva talks, and said it would hold internal deliberations on November 9 before coming to a final decision.

"There is an international effort, notably American, to persuade the Coalition to take part," Coalition member Samir Nashar said.

"Putting off a decision until November 9 aims to allow more time for discussions and to assist efforts to change the mind of those opposed."

The Assad regime said Wednesday that no foreign party could be involved in deciding the country's leadership, but that it was ready to attend the Geneva conference and "try its best to ensure its success without any preconditions or any foreign intervention."

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62153>

- **Syria set to hand over its disarmament plan**



Rebels blow up gas pipeline that feeds power station in south, causing blackouts across war-torn Syria.

Syria is set to hand over a detailed plan for destroying its chemical arsenal Thursday, the international watchdog says, as a rebel attack near Damascus triggered power outages across the country.

But prospects for a peace conference, which the United Nations is trying to convene in parallel with the disarmament process, looked dim after key opposition leaders spurned efforts by Western and Arab powers to persuade them to attend.

On the ground violence raged unabated Wednesday, with rebels striking a gas pipeline that caused blackouts across Syria. An AFP correspondent in Damascus said he could see a huge fire blazing close

to the airport, which is near the affected power station.

"A terrorist attack on a gas pipeline that feeds a power station in the south has led to a power outage in the provinces, and work to repair it is in progress," state news agency SANA quoted electricity minister Emad Khamis as saying.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said besides the Damascus region power outages were reported in Aleppo in the north and Homs in the centre.

"It is likely this was a large-scale operation planned well in advance," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.

In September, a similar outage was caused after a high voltage power line was sabotaged.

Also Wednesday a car bomb hit a checkpoint in a western suburb of Damascus, causing multiple casualties among the troops manning it, the Observatory said, and rebels shelled two of Damascus's main squares killing five people and wounding at least 22.

Meanwhile the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons said the Syrian government was expected to hand over its disarmament plan by Thursday.

The plan is the next step for Damascus under the terms of a US-Russian deal to head off military strikes on Syria which calls for all its chemical weapons and production facilities to be destroyed by mid-2014.

"We expect Syria's initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme within the next 24 hours," spokesman Michael Luhan told reporters Wednesday in The Hague, where the OPCW is based.

President Bashar al-Assad's regime has already handed over an inventory of its chemicals, weapons and facilities, and a joint UN-OPCW team has been in Syria since the start of the month inspecting and destroying them.

The team has now checked 18 of 23 declared sites in Syria, destroying production equipment at almost all of them, Luhan said.

But parallel efforts by the United Nations to convene a peace conference in Geneva

next month have run into resistance from the opposition, who are insisting on a raft of preconditions.

Leaders of the National Coalition -- the main opposition umbrella group -- insisted they will not attend unless regime change and Assad's departure are on the table.

A meeting in London Tuesday between opposition leaders and 11 governments from the Friends of Syria group produced little more than a joint statement that Assad should play no future role in government.

'Their participation is pivotal'

But behind the scenes Wednesday UN ambassador to Syria Robert Ford, who has built up a close relationship with the opposition leaders over the past years, huddled with key figures in Istanbul seeking to coax them to the negotiating table.

"Their participation is pivotal. We will continue encouraging them to attend, and that's why Ambassador Ford's on the ground talking to them right now in Istanbul," said deputy State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf.

The Assad regime retorted on Wednesday that no foreign party could be involved in deciding the country's leadership.

"The Syrian people will not allow any foreign party to impose itself ... in choosing a government, or in determining its powers and tasks," the foreign ministry said.

It said the government was ready to attend the planned Geneva conference to "try its best to ensure its success without any preconditions or any foreign intervention".

The opposition is due to meet at the start of November to finalise its position on the Geneva talks.

But Coalition head Ahmad Jarba showed no signs of readiness to compromise.

"The only thing we are willing to negotiate is a transfer of all power and then the departure of the mass killer (Assad)," he said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62128>

- **Syria frees women detainees in hostage deal**



The Syrian government has released a total of 62 women detainees as part of a three-way prisoner exchange, Al Jazeera has learned.

Sources said on Thursday that the women had been released over the past two days.

"We can expect more releases, but we have no confirmation that this will take place," Al Jazeera's Hoda Abdel-Hamid, reporting from the Bakaa Valley, said.

There was no immediate comment from Syrian officials.

Nine Lebanese Shia hostages held for 17 months by a rebel group in northern Syria were exchanged on Saturday for two Turkish pilots held in Lebanon since August.

The release of scores of female detainees held in government jails formed part of the deal arranged by Turkey, Qatar and Lebanon.



Our correspondent said the deal has prompted a belief that many more deals between the Syrian government and the opposition might be forthcoming.

Most of the women were released at the Masnaa crossing, near Lebanon. Many have since returned to their homes in Syria.

Tens of thousands of people are being detained by the Syrian regime, many of them without trial, activists say. Rights groups say torture and ill-treatment are systematic in Syria's jails.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/syria-frees-women-after-hostage-deal-2013102372117123946.html>

- **Syrian Kurds, jihadists battle for key supply route**

Fierce clashes erupted in Syria overnight between Kurdish fighters and jihadists near the Iraqi border, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Thursday.

"The clashes began around midnight (2100 GMT Wednesday) and lasted around 12 hours, with the Kurds advancing in the direction of Al-Yaarubia, an area controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other jihadist groups," the Britain-based monitor said.

"The Kurds have managed to take two villages controlled by the jihadists but it will be difficult to capture Al-Yaarubia from ISIL," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said.

The Al-Yaarubia border crossing with Iraq is seen as a key supply route for arms and fighters. ISIL has carried out attacks on both sides of the border.

The Kurds and the jihadists have been fighting for control of northeastern Syria, an area rich in oil and wheat, for months.

Rebels ostensibly fighting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad have increasingly turned their guns on each other in recent months, with jihadists clashing with the mainstream Free Syrian Army in the north, where the rebels control vast swathes of territory.

Kurdish fighters affiliated with Turkey's separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have meanwhile struggled to carve out an autonomous region in northeastern Syria similar to one in northern Iraq.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62138>

The U.S. Embassy in Damascus posted on its website that Washington got information suggesting the existence of plans to kidnap Western journalists in central and southern Syria.

Therefore, the U.S. authorities recommended citizens to refrain from traveling to Syria, and called upon those who are there not to leave the territory.

The statement did not refer to the source of danger.

It is worth mentioning that the U.S. embassy had suspended its work in Damascus since February 2012.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1829641>

- **US Embassy in Damascus Warns of Plans to Kidnap Western Journalists in Syria**



### 3. IRAN

- **Senior French MPs Call for Expansion of Ties with Iran**





TEHRAN (FNA)- French Senators Joelle Garriaud-Maylam and Jean-Yves Leconte, in a meeting with Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi, voiced France's readiness for bolstering bilateral ties with Iran in all fields.

Speaking at a meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, Garriaud-Maylam expressed the French Senate's readiness for expanding parliamentary ties with Iran's parliament.

She said that French and Iranian parliaments can facilitate further enhancement of all-out relations between Paris and Tehran.

Leconte, for his part, hailed Iran's significant and influential role in the Middle-East, noting that Tehran greatly contributes to the regional security as a mighty and stable country.

The two French senators left Paris for Tehran in early hours of Wednesday to confer with senior officials here on ways of bolstering mutual cooperation between the two countries.

Late in May, former Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for European and American Affairs Ali Asqar Khaji and French Foreign Ministry Director-General for North Africa and Middle-East Affairs Jean Francois Giroux in a meeting in Tehran discussed bilateral ties and regional developments.

During the meeting in Tehran, Khaji pointed to Iran's prominent position in the region and the country's efforts to promote regional and international peace and stability, and said, "Tehran seeks to enhance its cooperation and interaction with the European countries, including France, based on its own diplomatic principles."

Giroux, for his part, underlined the importance of Iran's influential role in the regional developments and called for continuation of bilateral talks between Iran and France.

Also on Saturday, a ranking delegation from the European parliament, comprised of three Socialist European lawmakers, headed by Hannes Swoboda, arrived in Tehran for a four-day visit.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920802000084>

- **Iran, Ghana Call for Broadening Bilateral Ties**



TEHRAN (FNA)- Ghanaian Parliament Speaker Edward Doe Ajaho and Iranian Industries, Mines and Trade Minister Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh said they are hopeful to see bolstering relations between the two friendly counties in all the various fields in the near future.

During the meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, Ajaho said the necessary measures would be undertaken for the establishment of a joint business council between Iran and Ghana.

“Iran has largely gained experience in mining exploration, which is ready to share it with friend countries,” Nematzadeh said.

“Ghana is rich in bauxite and manganese mines and Iran is ready to dispatch expert groups to that country to determine methods of cooperation in the aforementioned fields,” the Iranian official added.

The Ghanaian parliament speaker arrived in Tehran at the head of a high-ranking delegation on Monday.

Tehran has prioritized promotion of its economic and political ties with the African states and the country is now considered as one of the African Union (AU)'s strategic partners.

Tehran's efforts to boost ties and cooperation with Africa have led to its acceptance as an observing member of the AU, where it has shown an active presence in the AU summit meetings.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920802000287>

- **Iran Raps UN Rapporteur's Biased Human Rights Report**



TEHRAN (FNA)- Iran's UN mission lashed out at a report by the UN's Special Human Rights Rapporteur, Ahmed Shaheed, on the situation of human rights in Iran, describing it void of the existing realities of the country.

On Wednesday, the Iranian mission in New York rejected the report prepared by Ahmed Shaheed and called for a balanced and unbiased report devoid of political manipulations and tendencies.

The mission condemned the nature and the elements of the report and regretted the fact that it was prepared by a person without any familiarity with Iran's political and social conditions.

The Iranian representative said the report "has not paid sufficient notice to Iran's legal system and Islamic culture and considers whatever he sees in the West as

an international standard for the entire world."

Khazaei described Iran as the anchor of human rights and religious democracy in a region infested by extremism, terrorism and despotic regimes.

Iran's mission at the United Nations stressed Tehran's commitment to all international obligations, reiterating that Iran's new administration is willing to increase its level of cooperation with the human rights structures in the world.

"Iran, especially after the election of President (Hassan) Rouhani, has put a new emphasis on its unwavering dedication towards the promotion of all human rights inside and outside the country.

"The report is a product of a non objective and counter-productive exercise initiated by a group of countries with specific political claim against Iran... a catalogue of poorly resourced and outdated allegations," the mission insisted.

Iranian officials had already said that Ahmed Shaheed has only parroted the unfounded allegations raised by anti-

revolution elements against Iran since he had been tasked with accusing Iran.

"Since the very first day that Ahmad Shaheed was introduced as the United Nations rapporteur (on Iran) we guessed that he was a an American agent, but his later reports assured us that he has been assigned to this mission by the US," Chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi told FNA in October 2012.

"Ahmed Shaheed contacts anti-revolution elements instead of Iranian authorities to receive information and to prepare his reports, and acts in harmony with the Americans when compiling reports (on Iran)," he added.

Shaheed has merely interviewed with foreign-based opposition groups from Iran, Member of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mohammad Hassan Asafari said also in October 2012.

"Did Ahmed Shaheed visit Iran's prisons," he questioned.

He said that the report is full of ambiguities and such reports which are based on assumption of the western governments merely meet the desire of Zionist regime and the US.

Ahmed Shaheed has no experience or record of activities in providing reports and in the past he has acted as Myanmar foreign minister, he said.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920802000179>

- **Data Shows Iran as China's Biggest Oil Supplier in September**



TEHRAN (FNA)- China's customs data shows that Iran was the biggest supplier of fuel oil to the country in September.

The data, provided by China's General Administration of Customs, showed that Iran shipped 410,867mln tons (mt) of fuel oil to China in September.

Procured by China's state-owned trader Zhuhai Zhenrong, Iran's fuel oil shipments to China are mainly 280 CST grade, the London-based weekly Platts reported.

Iranian fuel oil was used by Dongfang Hualong, Sincier Chemical Group and Kengli Petrochemical, which consumed totally around 190,000 mt.

Reuters reported on October 21 that China's crude oil imports from Iran increased in September 2013 from one year earlier despite the US-led sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic's oil and financial sectors.

China imported 475,521 barrels per day (bpd) of Iranian crude oil last month, registering a 24-percent rise compared to the same period last year.

China, Iran's largest oil client, for the nine months through September bought 16.01 mt of Iranian crude oil, or an average of 428,160 bpd.

Trade between Iran and China in the past year was estimated at \$45bln.

Iran is currently China's third largest supplier of crude, providing Beijing with roughly 12 percent of its total annual oil consumption.

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

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

Despite the rules enshrined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entitling every member state, including Iran, to the right of uranium enrichment, Tehran is now under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions and the western embargos for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment.

Tehran has dismissed West's demands as politically tainted and illogical, stressing that sanctions and pressures merely

consolidate Iranians' national resolve to continue the path.

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

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13920802000357>

- **Iran blasts UN rights report as biased**



TEHRAN, Oct. 25 (MNA) – Iran has rejected the latest report of Ahmed Shaheed, the UN special rapporteur on the country's human rights situation, as biased and based on political motivations.

“In a region which is suffering from extremism, violence and terrorism, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the axis of regional stability and responsible

moderation, has constructive interaction with the international community and does not accept its human rights situation to be judged on the basis of biased reports,” said Marzieh Afkham, Iran Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, on Thursday.

Emphasizing that the Islamic Republic considers the appointment of the UN special rapporteur on human rights as an insult to the great nation of Iran and does not recognize it, she noted that the procedure for the appointment of a special rapporteur at the UN is entirely political and pursued by a select group of countries at the UN Human Rights Council.

Afkham further argued that the report has been prepared with political motives and has unfairly tried to describe the human rights state of Iran. She also emphasized that the main sources for the report have been terrorist and violence-seeking groups responsible for killing innocent people, making it unreliable and without a legal merit.

The Foreign Ministry spokeswoman then pointed to the rapporteur's lack of understanding of developments in Iran,

stressing that the report has ignored the high turnout of the Iranian population in the nation's latest presidential election in June. Shaheed's report was also slammed on Wednesday by the Islamic Republic's permanent mission at the United Nations.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1829668>

- **Iran beats US to win taekwondo gold**



TEHRAN, Oct. 25 (MNA) – Iranian men's national taekwondo team won the gold medals at the second SportAccord World Combat Games in Russia.

The Iranians routed their American and Venezuelan opponents 26-5 and 28-4 in the first and second matches on Wednesday, before they crushed South Koreans 27-7 in their third encounter on Thursday.

Later on Thursday, they overwhelmed the Spanish team 6-5 in the semi-finals, and

advanced to the final. The bronze medal went to Russians, who defeated the Spanish team 13-12.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1829671>

- **'Sanctions mostly affect Iranian patients'**



A political expert says Iranian patients have been taking the brunt of the US-engineered sanctions against the country.

"These sanctions are hurting the average ordinary Iranians... and if these sanctions continue, the number of those suffering among the average Iranian population will certainly grow," Kaveh Afrasiabi said in an exclusive interview on Wednesday.

Afrasiabi highlighted the grave consequences of the Western restrictions on the health sector, not only in terms of

“the difficulties of procuring medicine and medical equipment.”

“We need to consider other ripple effects of the sanctions in terms of increasing poverty and the difficulties for acquiring necessary medical services and so on and so forth, affecting the entire Iranian health sector,” he stressed.

The analyst blamed Israel and hawkish pro-Israel politicians in Washington and in other Western capitals for lobbying against easing the sanctions on the part of the US and other Western governments.

The United States, Israel and some of their allies have repeatedly accused Iran of pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program. Washington and the European Union have used the claim as an excuse to impose illegal sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

But Iran categorically rejects the allegation, arguing that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has the right to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

#### 4. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Israel announces new settlement building**



A senior Israeli official has said that his country will press ahead with plans to build in existing Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, a day after Israel's leader held talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry.

Local media said new building tenders could be announced next week, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu seeks to appease hardliners in his government opposed to peace talks with the Palestinians.

"In accordance with understandings reached on the eve of the restart of peace talks with the Palestinians, in the coming months Israel will continue to announce it will build in settlement blocs and in



Jerusalem," part of the statement by the unnamed official said on Thursday.

"Both the Americans and the Palestinians have been aware of these understandings," the statement said.

Nabil Abu Rdeneh, a spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, rejected the Israeli official's comments.

"We don't accept any settlement bids and Israel should stop these acts to give negotiations the opportunity to succeed," he said.

"For us, all settlements are illegal and Israel should stop putting obstacles in the way of peace and all its acts in this regard are illegal and void."

Negotiations revived

Netanyahu held talks with Kerry in Rome where the Israeli-Palestinian talks were on the agenda.

The US-brokered discussions were revived in July after a three-year hiatus, but have shown few signs of progress.

The Palestinians, who have been demanding halt in settlement construction as a condition for talks, reluctantly returned to the negotiating table under heavy American pressure.

Meanwhile, the pro-settler Jewish Home party, one of Netanyahu's main coalition partners, said on Thursday it would propose a bill to bar the release of Palestinian prisoners, which has been linked to the talks.

Israel's chief negotiator, Tzipi Livni, said in Tel Aviv on Thursday she could not divulge any details but a senior Palestinian official in the West Bank city of Ramallah described the talks as very difficult.

Palestinians want the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip for a future country but fear that more settlement building will deny them a viable state.

Settlement building in the territories occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six Day War is considered illegal under international law, and the issue remains one of the most divisive in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel withdrew in 2005 from the Gaza Strip, governed by Hamas Movement.

Israeli anti-settlement group Peace Now said last week that housing starts in West Bank settlements are up by 70 percent this year.

It said there were 1,708 housing starts in January-June this year, compared with 995 during the same period in 2012.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/israel-announces-new-settlement-building-2013102421256206762.html>

- **Bomb hurled at school bus in West Bank; no injuries**



An apparent makeshift bomb was hurled at a settler school bus near the Yaabud village in the northern West Bank. No injuries or damage were reported. Security forces are canvassing the area.

The incident joins a line of attacks in the West Bank in recent weeks. Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon addressed the matter during a visit in Hebron this week. "The past month has seen a series of six attacks, some of them clearly motivated by nationalistic reasons, and others, even if they started as criminal, we regard as nationalistic."

Ya'alon added that "this is a contagious wave of events and we will act decisively against it. However, there are no signs of an uprising or third Intifada in terms of motivation or organization, but we will prepare for any escalation there might be."

Earlier this month, Col. (res) Sariya Ofer was killed in the Jordan Valley. His wife told security forces that two Palestinians attacked her and her husband with iron bars and axes.

Only a week earlier, nine-year-old Noam Glick was wounded in her yard after a Palestinian infiltrated the settlement of Psagot. It was initially reported that Glick had been fired at but it was later revealed she had been stabbed.

Last month saw First Sergeant Gal Kobi shot to death by a Palestinian sniper only two days after soldier Tomer Hazan was murdered by a Palestinian co-worker.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4445398,00.html>

- **Bereaved parents denounce decision to hand over terrorists' bodies**



Parents who lost sons, daughters in terrorists bombings shocked, outraged to learn government intends to hand over terrorists' bodies to PA. 'They're killing us slowly,' bereaved father says

"My daughter was killed in vain? Just another number in the statistics?" This was the response Thursday of Ron Kerman from Haifa, regarding the State's intent to hand over to Palestinians the body of the suicide bomber whose suicide mission killed Kerman's daughter, Tal, and 16 other people in March 2003.

"If these talks would lead to an agreement, release would be possible, but this is nothing. Just talks," Kerman said. His daughter was killed when the 37 bus in Haifa exploded.

Parents who lost their sons and daughters in bombings in the second Intifada discovered from Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth the intent to hand over terrorists' bodies to their families.

"I'm not surprised," said Yossi Zur, whose son, Asaf, was also murdered on the 37 bus bombing. "No one updates us about anything. We will learn the details and fight this decision."

**'The State doesn't give us the time of day'**

Abigail Levy, whose daughter, Racheli, was murdered in a 2002 bombing at a supermarket in Jerusalem, was also furious: "The country is folding too much; what gestures are we making? There'll be more bombings and murders. I live in fear everyday." Abigail, who met the terrorist's family as part of the award winning film, "To Die in Jerusalem", said, "Those parents don't deserve for their daughter to have a grave."

As reported in Ynet and in Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel agreed to hand over bodies of Palestinian terrorists to their families. The agreement followed an appeal of those families to the Supreme Court through Israeli lawyers.

Palestinians sources told Ynet Thursday that Israel is to return the bodies of 36 terrorists, some of whom committed atrocious terrorist bombings. Families of the terrorists were invited to checkpoints in the West Bank on two dates, November 5 and 7, to give DNA samples, which will be given to the military rabbinate to complete identification of the bodies and then to the terrorists' families.

The news of the bodies being returned caught bereaved parents unprepared. "We've been dealing with them giving back living prisoners," Zur said, adding, "We had no idea handing over bodies is on the line."

Kerman said he was appalled: "It's unbelievable how the government is abusing bereaved families. He said: "They're killing us slowly, little by little. They talked about releasing terrorists in four rounds, and now they're giving back bodies as a bonus? And all this while the

terror is raising its head and we're standing on the verge of a third Intifada?"

He added: "The country just doesn't give us the time of day. Nobody sees us. The State had better start treating its citizens with more empathy than it does this wicked enemy."

Abigail Levy told Ynet: "This is the first I hear of this. I'll be furious if they return the body. These parents don't deserve to have a grave for their child. Her parents knew about her whole act; they don't deserve it, as far as I'm concerned let them bury her in Israel and not give them the pleasure. They don't deserve to have a grave. I'm beyond help."

Even though she met the mother of the terrorist who murdered her daughter, Abigail refuses to give up: "I will take part in any protest. I won't have them getting the body. Parents like that don't deserve it. They've been without it for 11 years, so why now? The terrorist's sister said she'd kill again. I knew them through the film and I saw who I was dealing with. I won't look at them."

The terrorists whose bodies are set to be returned include brothers Imad and Adel

Awadallah, Islamic Jihad members who carried out an attack in Otniel in 2002; Mahmoud Qawasme, Hamas suicide bomber who carried out an attack in Haifa that killed 17 people; Abdul Karim who carried out a suicide bombing in Afula in 2002; Izz al-Din al-Masry, the Sbarro restaurant suicide bomber that killed 15 people; Rajeb Jaradat, suicide bomber that killed eight people in 2001; Ala Sabah, suicide bomber who detonated a bomb at the Hadera bus station in 2001; and Dawd Saad, suicide bomber who carried out an attack near a Jerusalem hotel in 2001.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,734,0,L-4445346,00.html>

- **Israel weighs release of second batch of Palestinian prisoners**



Maariv daily says that 26 Palestinian prisoners would be freed, same number as in first tranche in August.

JERUSALEM - Israeli ministers are to meet Sunday to approve the release of a second batch of Palestinian prisoners under the terms of renewed peace talks, media said.

Maariv daily said Thursday that 26 prisoners would be freed, the same number as in the first tranche in August.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said two days before the July 30 resumption of talks that he had "agreed to free 104 Palestinians in stages, after the start of negotiations and according to progress."

Since the August release, Netanyahu's office has made no statement on a second round.

Maariv said the next handover would take place on Tuesday.

The European Union's mission to Israel said that envoys of the Middle East Quartet group would meet the same day in Jerusalem.

Israeli public radio said that in tandem with confirming the prisoner release, Israeli authorities would announce a new

swathe of settler housing to be built in the occupied West Bank.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62156>

It did not specify how many homes or where.

- **Israel to deliver 7 Palestinian bodies to West Bank families**

The last direct talks collapsed in September 2010 over continued Jewish settlement building in the occupied West Bank.



In August, Israeli authorities approved the construction of more than 2,000 settlement units in east Jerusalem and the West Bank. That came just days before a round of direct bilateral talks, leading the Palestinians to warn that the fledgling process was in danger of collapse.

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- Israeli authorities agreed Thursday to return the bodies of seven Palestinians killed by the Israeli army, a Palestinian official told Ma'an.

Israeli media also said Thursday that military forensics experts would begin DNA testing next month on relatives of at least 30 Palestinians killed over the years in militant attacks on Israelis, with a view to returning their remains where a match was found.

Salem Khelleh, an official in charge of a national campaign to return the remains to West Bank families, said Israel would deliver the bodies to Qalqiliya on Nov. 5.

Public radio said the move was unrelated to the peace talks and was in response to a petition by the families to the Supreme Court.

Khelleh told Ma'an the names of the seven deceased Palestinians:

Ahmad Yasser Saleh from Asira al-Qibliya - Nablus

Ayat al-Akhras from Dheisheh refugee camp - Bethlehem

Sami Bsharat from Tammun - Jenin

Majdi Khanfar from Silat al-Dhahr - Jenin  
Mohammad Mustafa Shahin from Doura -  
Hebron  
Ahmad Ayed al-Faqih from Dura - Hebron  
Mahmoud al-Qawasmi - Hebron

Before the bodies are delivered to their respective families, Khelleh said, they will be taken to the medical center at al-Quds University for DNA testing.

Israel's decision to return the bodies comes in conjunction with the US-brokered peace talks with the Palestinians.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=640890>

- **Protesters shut down street in Qalandiya camp**



RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- A group of men in Qalandiya refugee camp blocked a main road Thursday to protest the Palestinian

Authority's continued detention of a political prisoner, witnesses told Ma'an.

Locals said that the protesters shut down the camp's central street - one that connects Ramallah to cities in the southern West Bank - and additionally closed entrances to the camp, burnt tires and threw stones at passersby.

The men were protesting the Palestinian Authority's detention of Rabe'e Hamad, a man who was released from Israeli prison 8 months ago, locals said.

The PA is still detaining Hamad despite a court decision to release him, locals added.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=640932>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **Residents trapped as Tripoli clashes hit fifth day**



TRIPOLI, Lebanon: Fighting in Tripoli raged on for a fifth consecutive day, reaching a fever pitch with intense sniper and rocket fire early Friday.

Residents of the northern city voiced feelings of helplessness and anger, as the death toll rose to six with dozens more wounded.

Maha al-Ali, a resident of the predominately Alawite Jabal Mohsen, which is currently locked in battle with its Sunni rival, Bab al-Tabbaneh, said she, her family and neighbors had stayed inside since the violence erupted Monday.

“I stay at home during the clashes because I may get attacked by some irrational groups who would harm me just because I’m Alawite,” she said. “Unfortunately, this is not the diverse and tolerant Tripoli [I know], this city is becoming ugly and doesn’t accept other sects anymore.”

Ali told The Daily Star that she feels that gunmen control daily life in the city, as schools, universities and most businesses shutter indefinitely each time the unmistakable rattle of gunfire and the boom of rocket-propelled grenades drown out all other sounds.

Tripoli, Lebanon’s second largest city, has seen recurrent clashes linked to the crisis in neighboring Syria, namely between Jabal Mohsen, which backs Syrian President Bashar Assad, and Bab al-Tabbaneh, which supports his opponents. The preliminary investigation into August’s deadly twin bombings at the Al-Taqwa and Al-Salam mosques turned up links with a local pro-Assad political party based in Jabal Mohsen. Tensions erupted Monday following a television interview with Assad.

“The violence has reached its 18th round,” Ali said, adding jokingly: “It’s all grown up now!”

Her sentiments were echoed by Bab al-Tabbaneh resident Helmi Al-Mawwas, who complained that the volatile situation in the city produced constant anxiety.



“Even when the situation is calm, we are always living in fear that the clashes will erupt at any moment. ... We’ve had enough,” he said.

Ahmad Mnajed, a Tripoli resident, said he had been trapped in the Baqqar neighborhood for over three days and was running low on food for his family.

“I cannot get to work because of the clashes, and I have been forced to borrow money from some neighbors to get some goods from the grocery store,” he said. “The situation is just unbearable.”

The Lebanese University branch in Qibbeh, which is located close to the front lines, remained closed Thursday, postponing entrance exams.

“How can the students get an education and live a normal academic life if their university keeps closing with every round of violence?” said an outraged professor, Mahmoud Zyadeh. “This is the national university. We can’t go on like that.

“Is this the punishment of the students of the Lebanese University because they are poor and they can’t attend other private

universities which are located away from the front lines?”

The economy has also taken a huge hit since the residents of surrounding towns and villages who usually do their shopping in Tripoli go elsewhere. The shop owners and merchants in the city said they didn’t expect the situation to improve even after the clashes subside, adding that it would take a lot to restore trust in the security situation.

Even the old city markets have not been spared, with battles between the Nashar and Genzerli families raging there Wednesday night, prompting the Lebanese Army to deploy heavily in the historical district to protect the ancient markets, buildings and mosques.

Twelve people were wounded Thursday, bringing the total number to 50 since the clashes erupted.

Bassam Youssef Abdallah was killed Thursday afternoon by sniper fire in Jabal Mohsen. Abdallah’s son, Walid, is a fighter in the pro-Assad Arab Democratic Party headed by Rifaat Eid.

Misbah al-Nazer, a businessman, was also killed early Thursday by sniper fire as the fighting, which began Monday evening, raged throughout the night. President Michel Sleiman said late Thursday that he instructed security forces led by the Army to redeploy and restore order as soon as possible following a meeting earlier in the day at Baabda Palace to discuss the crisis in Tripoli.

“It is no longer acceptable for bloodshed in Tripoli to continue and all officials should work on saving the capital of the north,” Sleiman tweeted.

The meeting was also attended by caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati, ministers and security chiefs.

Following the meeting, Mikati, who admitted that a plan to bring security in the city had yet to be realized, said new “serious” measures would be implemented.

“The situation in Tripoli cannot go on as is, and we should put an end to the security recklessness in the city,” he said. “Tripoli’s citizens rely on the state and we cannot let them down.”

Meanwhile, Salafist Sheikh Salem al-Rafi, a prominent Islamist figure in Tripoli, lashed out at the ADP, based in Jabal Mohsen, while calling on the government to shoulder its responsibility toward the city.

ADP leader Eid, for his part, said he “did not expect the clashes to end soon,” implying that his political foes had a vested interest in them continuing.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon/News/2013/Oct-25/235724-residents-trapped-as-tripoli-clashes-hit-fifth-day.ashx#axzz2iibAtBJ4>

- **Sidon residents allege mismanagement of landfill**



SIDON, Lebanon: Residents living close to the notorious “trash mountain” landfill in the southern city of Sidon claim the waste is not being properly treated and sorted and that the foul odors have returned.

The claims come despite assurances from the United Nations Development Program and contractors that all proper measures were being taken.

Locals noticed the familiar stench about a week ago, not long after the UNDP led journalists on a much-lauded tour of the site to show off the first stage of the cleanup process.

This involves the extraction of harmful gases from the dump, the sorting of the garbage, the elimination of toxic materials and the transferral of waste materials to the waste-sorting plant. The site is also equipped to bury organic waste underground after it has been sorted.

When The Daily Star visited the landfill site earlier this week, dozens of trucks and bulldozers were digging up waste from the southern side of the dump and taking it to the organic section without treating or sorting it.

Rubbish being dumped along with organic waste matter included car parts, plastic bottles, metals and rubble, among with other items.

The equipment installed for extracting methane gas, which had been unveiled with such fanfare during the tour, had apparently been dismantled.

Suez Environment and Al-Jihad for Commerce and Contracting have been commissioned to ensure the cleanup process is properly implemented.

When The Daily Star asked Hani Francis, one of the engineers with Al-Jihad – which is supervising the treatment of the dump – about transferral of waste from the dump to the organic landfill without treatment, he responded that everything was being carried out according to the tender.

The companies had the right to bury organic waste in the landfill without treatment, he added.

Edgar Chehab, an engineer with the UNDP, claimed the agency had done its own tests that showed the waste going into the landfill was organic and therefore did not need to be treated before being buried.

Nevertheless, residents demanded that the Environment Ministry and Sidon Municipality closely monitor the activities

being carried out by the contracting company working in the landfill to ensure it was complying with the conditions of the tender.

A laboratory constructed by a French team was established on-site to examine inorganic materials extracted from the waste, which would then be recycled to make a wave breaker to prevent high tides from reaching the site during winter.

The organic materials were supposed to be put aside to decompose for energy extraction purposes.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Oct-25/235677-sidon-residents-allege-mismanagement-of-landfill.ashx#axzz2iibAtBJ4>

- **Tripoli Sheikh urges dissolution of ADP**

Tripoli's Sunni Sheikh Salem al-Rafei called on the state to dissolve the Alawite Jabal Mohsen-based Arab Democratic Party after some party members were indicted for the August Tripoli bombings.

"I request that the state dissolve the ADP given that the investigations accused it of [carrying out] the Tripoli bombings," Rafei said on Thursday following a meeting between front commanders and sheikhs in the cleric's residence to discuss the latest ongoing clashes between Tripoli's warring quarters of Sunni-majority Bab al-Tebbaneh and Alawite-populated Jabal Mohsen.

Rafei said that the state must treat ADP chief Rifaat Eid as "a criminal."

He also lashed out at the security plan, which he claimed "does not stop the assailants."

"The security plan does not defend us, neither does it allow us to defend ourselves."

Five people have so far been killed in Northern Lebanon in the ongoing four-day clashes between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime.

Another 35 people have been wounded in the fighting between residents of two adjacent neighborhoods in the northern city of Tripoli which are divided over the civil war in neighboring Syria.

The flare-up of violence took place despite the presence of security forces that have been deployed earlier in the month as part of a security plan which was masterminded following the twin explosions that rocked Tripoli on August 23, leaving 45 people dead.

Jabal Mohsen, where most residents share the Alawite faith of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has long been a bastion of support for his regime, while residents of Bab al-Tebbaneh back the Sunni-led revolt.

Militants from Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tebbaneh have clashed on numerous occasions since the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011, raising fears the conflict could spill over into multi-sectarian Lebanon.

<https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/lebanonne ws/517295-tripoli-sheikh-urges-dissolution-of-adp>

- **Western envoy: Lebanon not likely to attend Geneva II**



A European ambassador in Beirut said Thursday that the visit of U.N.-Arab League Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi to Beirut last week was intended to pave the way for Lebanon's participation in the Geneva II conference on Syria, but added that Lebanon's participation was still very much up in the air.

The ambassador said that it was possible that Lebanon could announce that it would not be participating in the conference, in accordance with the disassociation policy. He added that negotiations between President Michel Sleiman and caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati were underway to find a "diplomatic way" to reject the invitation to participate in the conference.

The ambassador, who recently embarked on a high-level visit to the United States and a European capital, excluded the possibility that Geneva II would be held on schedule for Nov. 23, since major

international forces have yet to carve out a clear plan for the post-Assad stage.

Brahimi will tour several capitals in the region over the weekend and is expected to return to Geneva on Nov. 5 to meet with representatives from Russia and the United States.

Saudi Arabia, however, has not given Brahimi the green light to meet with its officials.

The diplomat said that reaching a diplomatic solution to the Syrian crisis was “not feasible” in the current climate because regional powers have no idea who is winning the war.

Reasons for the ambiguity on the ground were attributed to the lack of information about which areas in Syria are controlled by the regime or rebel forces, and because of the contradictions and disputes among the ranks of the opposition.

“The emergence of fundamentalist armed groups, such as ISIS [the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria] and the Nusra Front, as well as other groups, was the handiwork of regional intelligence agencies, with Western cover, to prolong

the Syrian crisis until the two fighting camps are exhausted and forced to sit at the negotiation table,” he said.

The ambassador went on to say that the international community was unlikely to push for a resolution on domestic Lebanese issues, including the formation of a Cabinet, until the regional crises have worked themselves out or at least become clearer.

“I don’t see the Cabinet formation happening before presidential elections since regional complexities are still present and the international community is focused on preserving stability in Lebanon and avoiding dangerous security incidents by neutralizing the country from regional disputes” the envoy said.

He went on to say that each country will likely pursue its own interests. The United States, for example, has several priorities with respect to its foreign policy in the region, the first of which being Syria. Diplomats have been working hard to find a solution that takes into consideration the threat posed by the regime and fundamentalist opposition groups.

The second U.S. priority is Iran, where Washington is interested in opening communication channels to reach an agreement with Tehran about its nuclear program. If these efforts are successful, the ambassador said, it could lead to positive contributions from Tehran to finding solutions to the Syrian crisis.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Oct-25/235714-western-envoy-lebanon-not-likely-to-attend-geneva-ii.ashx#axzz2iibAtBJ4>

- **Nine private companies receive Gender Equity Seal**



AMMAN — Nine private Jordanian companies in the fields of tourism and ICT on Thursday received the Gender Equity Seal (GES) accreditation, under which they will work towards fostering equal opportunities in their respective establishments according to a specific action plan.

Implemented by UN Women Jordan, the GES accreditation aims at institutionalising gender equity policies and facilitating equal opportunities for men and women in access to jobs, professional development, training and participation in decision making.

Implemented first in Mexico, the initiative was then adopted in Egypt and recently in Jordan.

The GES is only concerned with the inclusion of women in the workforce, but the quality of the inclusion also matters, according to Gülden Türköz-Cosslett, director of the UN Women Programme Support Division.

At a ceremony to present the nine companies with the GES, she underlined that countries which have equal work opportunities have the highest gross domestic product per capita and stronger economic competitiveness.

“Studies have showed that companies that include women on their boards excel more than those that do not,” Türköz-Cosslett added.

HRH Princess Basma, honorary ambassador of UN Women, underlined the importance of the programme in guiding companies to commit to meritocracy, noting that it encourages and supports subscribed establishments to create a more gender sensitive enabling environment.

“For years now we have been trying to understand why women’s economic participation in Jordan continues to be low even though their educational attainment is relatively high,” said the princess.

“Trying to resolve this paradox is becoming a tedious and disenchanting experience,” Princess Basma added, noting that it is apparent that there are “strong social, institutional and legal barriers that hinder women’s active participation in the labour market”.

She noted that women’s capacities and potentials continue to be socially undermined, as their economic participation is perceived secondary to that of men.

“Unfortunately, this alarming perception has become a common norm within companies, even though it marginalises

women as equal and essential productive citizens who not only can contribute to their families’ well-being, but also to society and the overall national economic growth,” Princess Basma highlighted.

She said that the GES seeks to ensure companies’ commitment to adopt principles of equal access and opportunity, free of discrimination for staff.

While sectors like tourism and ICT have boomed, Jordanian women’s representation is still low in these areas, constituting only 10 per cent of the total workers in the tourism sector for example, according to Minister of Tourism and Labour Nidal Katamine.

“There are no equal opportunities in the labour market,” he noted.

Ola Jundi, achieving equality project assistant at the UN Women Jordan country programme, agreed, adding that even in the ICT sector, women are absent in senior positions and only hold administrative posts that lack technicality.

“To this effect, companies enrolled in the programme go through four phases, first of which is self-assessment in order to



analyse their situation and realise their shortcomings,” she told The Jordan Times, adding that the remaining stages are training, marketing and audit.

“Companies that are accredited with the seal will not only benefit from attracting competent employees, but will also have a global reputation that would make them in the forefront,” she said, noting that 10 companies signed the UN Global Compact to join the programme, but nine managed to receive the accreditation.

The GES will be granted to the companies for two years and can be extended afterwards, according to Jundi.

<http://jordantimes.com/nine-private-companies-receive-gender-equity-seal>

- **King opens key projects in Aqaba Port, meets officials, investors**



AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday inaugurated the expansion of

the Aqaba Container Terminal and the new phosphate terminal.

During a visit to Aqaba, some 330km south of Amman, the King was briefed on the future work plan of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) and on the plans of the Aqaba Development Corporation (ADC) prior to a meeting with local, Arab and foreign investors.

While meeting with ASEZA members, the King stressed the importance of team work and coordination among the concerned parties in Aqaba in a manner that serves to implement future strategic projects, draw investments, provide jobs to citizens and improve their living conditions.

King Abdullah called for establishing an advisory board with members from ASEZA and the local community to determine the needs of the local community and engage it in the decision-making process, a Royal Court statement said.

Underlining the economic importance of Aqaba, the King said all concerned parties should work to boost its competitiveness at the regional and international levels

through constant development of the investment environment.

The King directed the government to convene a Cabinet meeting in Aqaba as soon as possible to discuss ways to deal with the challenges facing the various sectors there and discuss government plans to boost investment projects and develop the business environment.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said he will implement the King's directives by holding several meetings bringing together ministers, officials and representatives of the local community in Aqaba to become acquainted with their problems and prepare suitable solutions.

ASEZA Chief Commissioner Kamel Mahadin highlighted the authority's future work plan, which comprises improving the infrastructure to serve tourism and investment projects as well as reviewing the law regulating its work.

According to Mahadin, the investment volume at Aqaba International Industrial Estate has so far exceeded \$180 million and generated 900 jobs.

During a visit to ADC offices, the King met with a number of Arab and foreign investors and stressed the need to provide the necessary facilities to attract investors to Aqaba.

The advisory board he called for will include representatives of the public and private sectors who will address challenges facing investors and prepare joint strategies to enhance Aqaba's investment environment.

Jordan is among the leading countries in establishing development zones, His Majesty said, highlighting China's experience in this field.

He added that the government and concerned parties are, therefore, required to work to ensure that the development zones in governorates fulfil the desired goals.

"Our ambition in Jordan is to provide job opportunities and improve citizens' living conditions," the Monarch noted.

For his part, Ensour said the government works to implement Royal directives and provide an investor-friendly environment

to help develop Aqaba and support its local community.

ADC CEO Ghassan Ghanem briefed His Majesty on the company's main investments and their role in supporting the private sector to provide a suitable investment environment.

The investors said they believed in the economic feasibility of investing in Jordan, stressing the need to provide more incentives to attract projects that will help develop the city further.

They called for improving the King Hussein International Airport and easing customs procedures.

In remarks to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Al Maabar Managing Director Yousef Al Nowais commended Aqaba's economic "renaissance", adding that the company seeks to expand its projects in Aqaba and Amman.

The ADC was launched in 2004 "with the objective of unlocking the potential of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone (ASEZ) by accelerating its economic growth and development", according to its website.

The ADC owns Aqaba's seaport, airport and strategic parcels of land as well as the development and management rights for these assets.

It is mandated to develop ASEZ through building new or expanding existing infrastructure.

Jordan has been upgrading its infrastructure through projects between the public and private sectors, under which the state retains land and infrastructure ownership while the private sector undertakes the responsibilities of financing, construction, and development and operational activities.

Projects implemented in line with this approach over the past years included the expansion to the Queen Alia International Airport, the Disi Water Conveyance Project, the new terminals in Aqaba and electricity-generation projects.

The expanded container terminal, which the King inaugurated on Thursday, has seen the berth extended to 1,000 metres from 540 metres and the anchorage upgraded to accommodate three huge ships at the same time. This will provide accelerated logistic services to investors.

After the expansion, the terminal, which deals with 20 major international shipping lines, will be able to handle 1.5 million containers and further expansion is planned in three to five years to raise the handling capacity to 2.2 million containers.

In 2003, the ADC, on behalf of ASEZA, went into partnership to improve the efficiency, capacity and the operational performance of the container terminal in Aqaba.

After signing a Terminal Management Contract with ADC in 2004, APM Terminals (part of the global A.P. Moller–Maersk Group) took over the management and operation of the terminal.

The new phosphate terminal has been set up at a cost of \$240 million with a storage capacity of 240,000 tonnes. Built on a Build, Operate and Transfer basis, the terminal's handling capacity is expected to reach six million tonnes annually. It features a 200-metre berth and can accommodate ships of various sizes, from 5,000 to 100,000-tonne shipments.

<http://jordantimes.com/king-opens-key-projects-in-aqaba-port-meets-officials-investors>

## 6. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Patriarch of Maronite Church asks Qatar to help release bishops**



No group claims responsibility for kidnappings, but sources at Greek Orthodox Church say kidnappers were 'Chechen jihadists'.

The patriarch of the Maronite Church, Bechara Boutros Rai, said Thursday he has asked for Qatari mediation to help secure the release of two bishops abducted in Syria.

His request came after Qatar, which backs Syrian rebels, played a key role in Saturday's release of nine Lebanese Shiite hostages held for 17 months by a rebel group in northern Syria in exchange for two Turkish pilots abducted in Lebanon in August.

"We thanked Qatar for all it had done to press for the release of the Lebanese (citizens) abducted" in Syria, the Lebanese patriarch told reporters in Doha after he held talks on Wednesday with the emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

"We hoped they will work to help clarify the fate of two bishops and three priests kidnapped in February, March and April," the patriarch said.

Aleppo's Greek Orthodox Bishop Boulos Yaziji and Syriac Orthodox Bishop Yohanna Ibrahim were seized by armed men in April near the northern city of Aleppo.

No group has claimed responsibility for the kidnappings, but sources at the Greek Orthodox Church have said the kidnappers were "Chechen jihadists."

Christians account for around five percent of Syria's population.

They have become increasingly vulnerable to attack and abductions in the lawlessness that has engulfed much of the country since an uprising against President Bashar al-Assad erupted two years ago.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62157>

- **Saudi government warns driving ban activists**



Saudi Arabia has warned that it will take measures against activists who go ahead with a planned weekend campaign to defy a ban on women drivers in the conservative Muslim kingdom.

The women organising the campaign have been posting online footage of themselves driving in Saudi cities, and have called on Saudi women with foreign driving licences to get behind the wheel on Saturday.

"It is known that women in Saudi are banned from driving and laws will be applied against violators and those who demonstrate in support" of this cause, Interior Ministry spokesman General Mansur al-Turki told the AFP news agency.

October 26 is a day on which women in Saudi Arabia will say they are serious about driving and that this matter must be resolved

Manal al-Sharif, activist

Activists have posted a message on social networks asking Saudi women, individually, to go behind the wheel, in a campaign in the world's only country that bans women from driving.

The campaigners hope to take advantage of the ambiguous nature of the kingdom's ban on women driving, which is not explicitly enshrined in either the kingdom's Islamic law or its traffic code.

On Wednesday, the Interior Ministry issued a statement saying it would crack down against anyone who attempts to "disturb public peace" by congregating or marching "under the pretext of an alleged day of female driving".

The Interior Ministry spokesman has insisted that "all gatherings are prohibited" in Saudi Arabia, but activists have repeatedly insisted throughout their campaign that no demonstrations will be held.

"October 26 is a day on which women in Saudi Arabia will say they are serious about driving and that this matter must be resolved," activist Manal al-Sharif, one of the organisers of this Saturday's campaign, told AFP news agency about the weekend protest.

Rights watchdog Amnesty International has urged the Saudi authorities to respect the right of women to drive.

"It is astonishing that in the 21st century the Saudi Arabian authorities continue to deny women the right to legally drive a car," Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme, said.

Minor offence

Women who defied the ban in the past were charged with the relatively minor offence of driving without a valid Saudi

licence, which are not issued to women in the kingdom.

But some have also been charged with more serious offences, such as disturbing public order, which is illegal in the monarchy.

In 1990, authorities stopped 47 women who got behind the wheel in a demonstration against the driving ban.

In 2011, the Dubai-based Sharif was arrested and held nine days for posting online a video of herself behind the wheel.

That year Saudi police arrested a number of women who defied the driving ban and forced them to sign a pledge not to drive again.

Saudi women need permission from a male guardian to travel, work and marry.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/saudi-warns-women-against-defying-driving-ban-20131024165440384707.html>

- **Qatari Sheikha tops influential art list**



Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the head of the Qatar Museums Authority (QMA), has been named the most influential personality in the world of art, a leading art magazine has announced.

ArtReview in its annual "Power 100" listing of the most powerful figures on the international art scene, said on Thursday that Sheikha Al-Mayassa, sister of the current emir of Qatar, topped the charts due to "her organisation's vast purchasing power".

"[But] Sheikha Al-Mayassa's influence is not merely confined to international art salerooms and the goings-on in the dusty Gulf state," the magazine said in its profile of Al-Mayassa.

"No wonder, then, that whenever Sheikha Al-Mayassa is in town, everyone from government ministers to mayors queue up to pay their respect".

Mark Rappolt, editor of ArtReview told the Guardian newspaper that the numbers spoke for themselves in terms of Al-Mayassa's "sheer buying power and what that means for the market".

The next three art personalities on the list are the American dealers David Zwirner, Iwan Wirth and Larry Gagosian.

China's Ai Weiwei, is the highest-placed artist at number nine, followed by the performance artist Marina Abramovi, at number 11.

According to the magazine, the "Power 100" is "a unique snapshot of the contemporary art scene" and those included "judged on their international influence over the production of art and contribution to the art world during the past 12 months".

Sheikha Al-Mayassa's brother Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani took over as emir of Qatar after his father stepped down in June this year.

The QMA spends about \$1bn a year on art, including developing galleries,

sponsoring and arranging film festivals and public art, the magazine said.

Al-Mayassa first appeared on the "Power 100" in 2011 at number 90, rising to number 11 last year.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2013/10/qatari-sheikha-tops-influential-art-list-20131024103256504702.html>

- **The U.S.-Saudi crackup reaches a dramatic tipping point**



The strange thing about the crackup in U.S.-Saudi relations is that it has been on the way for more than two years, like a slow-motion car wreck, but nobody in Riyadh or Washington has done anything decisive to avert it.

The breach became dramatic over the past week. Last Friday, Saudi Arabia refused to take its seat on the United Nations Security Council, in what Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi intelligence



chief, described as “a message for the U.S., not the U.N,” according to the Wall Street Journal. On Tuesday, Prince Turki al-Faisal, a former head of Saudi intelligence, voiced “a high level of disappointment in the U.S. government’s dealings” on Syria and the Palestinian issue, in an interview with Al-Monitor.

What should worry the Obama administration is that Saudi concern about U.S. policy in the Middle East is shared by the four other traditional U.S. allies in the region: Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Israel. They argue (mostly privately) that Obama has shredded U.S. influence by dumping President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, backing Mohamed Morsi, vacillating in its Syria policy, and now embarking on negotiations with Iran — all without consulting close Arab allies.

Saudi King Abdullah privately voiced his frustration with U.S. policy in a lunch in Riyadh Monday with King Abdullah of Jordan and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of the U.A.E., according to a knowledgeable Arab official. The Saudi monarch “is convinced the U.S. is unreliable,” this official said. “I don’t see a genuine desire to fix it” on either side, he added.

The Saudis’ pique, in turn, has reinforced the White House’s frustration that Riyadh is an ungrateful and sometimes petulant ally. When Secretary of State John Kerry was in the region a few weeks ago, he asked to visit Bandar. The Saudi prince is said to have responded that he was on his way out of the kingdom, but that Kerry could meet him at the airport. This response struck U.S. officials as high-handed.

Saudi Arabia obviously wants attention, but what’s surprising is the White House’s inability to convey the desired reassurances over the past two years. The problem was clear in the fall of 2011, when I was told by Saudi officials in Riyadh that they increasingly regarded the U.S. as unreliable and would look elsewhere for their security. Obama’s reaction to these reports was to be peeved that the Saudis didn’t recognize all that the U.S. was doing to help their security, behind the scenes. The president was right on the facts but wrong on the atmospherics.

The bad feeling that developed after Mubarak’s ouster deepened month by month: The U.S. supported Morsi’s election as president; cut aid to the

Egyptian military after it toppled Morsi and crushed the Brotherhood; promised covert aid to the Syrian rebels it never delivered; threatened to bomb Syria and then allied with Russia, instead; and finally embarked on a diplomatic opening to Iran, Saudi Arabia's deadly rival in the Gulf.

The policies were upsetting; but the deeper damage resulted from the Saudi feeling that they were being ignored — and even, in their minds, double crossed. In the traditional Gulf societies, any such sense of betrayal can do lasting damage, yet the administration let the problems fester.

The administration' lack of communication with the Saudis and other Arab allies is mystifying at a time when the U.S. is exploring new policy initiatives, such as working with the Russians on dismantling chemical weapons in Syria and negotiating a possible nuclear deal with Iran. Those U.S. policy initiatives are sound, in the view of many analysts (including me), but they worry the Saudis and others—making close consultation all the more important.

<http://old.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1829640>

- **UAE's nuclear policy highlights government's transparent approach: minister**



Abu Dhabi: The UAE's nuclear policy highlights the government's transparent approach and commitment to safety, security and non-proliferation, Dr Anwar Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Federal National Council Affairs, said on Thursday.

“Consistent with this policy, the UAE has adopted strong transparent measures into the design of the programme, including commitments not to pursue sensitive technologies. The UAE has signed up to all non-proliferation instruments and opened up its programme and activities to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We received independent reviews from the IAEA to evaluate the adequacy of

the nuclear infrastructure, which concluded positively,” Dr Gargash on Thursday told the meeting of the International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation Executive Committee held in Abu Dhabi.

Dr Gargash stressed it was “the lack of responsible safeguards and transparency that makes the expansion of nuclear energy in the Arab Gulf region and the wider Middle East a problematic proposition.”

He said safety was fundamental to the UAE’s nuclear policy.

“Lessons learnt in the aftermath of Fukushima have been instrumental in our planning for the future. In the last few years, the UAE has developed a whole new framework for nuclear safety. We have established a comprehensive nuclear law, a fully independent nuclear safety regulator and new regulations,” Dr Gargash said.

The International Framework For Nuclear Energy Cooperation, IFNEC, aims to strengthen cooperation between member states and concerned international

organisations to support the peaceful use of nuclear energy in a way that meets the highest standards of safety, security and non-proliferation.

Dr Gargash said sustainability for the nuclear programme was one of the main principles of the UAE approach.

“The programme is being developed in a way that ensures success in the long run. This is demonstrated through government and industry initiatives for training and development of human resources,” Dr Gargash said.

Dr Gargash reiterated the UAE highly valued the international nuclear cooperation framework as a crucial platform for strengthening safety, obtaining expertise and sharing experiences while ensuring the transfer of nuclear material and technology.

The UAE signed nine bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements since 2008, when the government adopted a nuclear policy.

Two reactors are under construction today, making the UAE the first country to start the construction of its first nuclear power plant in 27 years.

Hamad Al Ka'abi, UAE Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA and Chairman of the Executive Committee Ministerial Meeting, said the UAE was honoured to host and chair the IFNEC Executive Committee meeting and working together to address the significant global energy, environmental and economic challenges that directly affect the well-being of people worldwide.

He said the UAE's hosting of this high-level meeting reflects the country's aspirations and its successful efforts to play a vital role in the development of frameworks of international cooperation to support the peaceful use of nuclear energy, according to a transparent approach based on international standards.

Al Ka'abi stressed that the development of the UAE's nuclear energy programme was based on cooperation with international partners, and said that he expected the meeting to adopt a joint statement identifying priorities for joint action and desired results of the framework for future cooperation.

While respecting the right of each country to define its national energy policy, the Executive Committee of the International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation recognised that nuclear power remains an important option for many countries to improve energy security, reduce the impact of volatile fossil fuels prices and mitigate the effects of climate change, despite the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/government/uae-s-nuclear-policy-highlights-government-s-transparent-approach-minister-1.1246715>

- **Bahrain court releases Al Wefaq leader Khalil Marzouq**

Manama: A Bahrain court on Thursday released Khalil Marzouq, the deputy secretary-general of Al Wefaq National Islamic Society, after adjourning his trial on November 18.

Marzouq is facing charges of "inciting terrorism and promoting acts that constitute crimes of terrorism."

First Attorney-General Abdul Rahman Al Sayed earlier this month said that the charges levelled after the Public Prosecution completed its investigations of the case also included “using a position within a legally formed political association to call for committing crimes that constitute acts of terrorism punishable under the Community Protection Law.”

Marzouq told the court hearing on Thursday that he rejects violence but stands by his calls for peaceful anti-government protests to force reforms in the country.

He told the three-judge panel that he supports peaceful efforts to force political concessions from the government. But he denied any support for bombings and other attacks, which have been on the rise.

The former lawmaker, who was arrested on September 17 pending the investigation, was also charged with “advocating support for perpetrators of criminal activities and justifying their crimes, calling for the continued planting of explosives and for acts of violence, supporting the criminal activities by

persons accused of committing terrorist acts, advocating their crimes as well as pushing for disobeying laws.”

Al Sayed said that the Public Prosecution had confronted the defendant with audio recordings of his speeches that proved his endorsement of “the principles advocated by the terrorists who have committed many acts of planting explosives, murder and all forms of violence, and in particular the terrorist group called ‘The February 14 Coalition’.”

Marzouq openly declared his support for that group and raised its flag, which was handed over to him by an unknown masked person at one of the numerous speeches he delivered, Al Sayed said.

“In addition, he has justified legally punishable acts and stated that those criminal practices supplemented the so-called ‘revolution’ and contributed to its success,” he said.

In his statement, the First Attorney-General said that the charges were based on evidence that proved violation of the law and the breach of freedom of expression stipulated in the international covenants on freedom of opinion and

expression, and that Khalil Marzouq had not been detained for political activities or speech related charges..

“For many years, Khalil Marzouq has carried out his political activities unhindered both in and out of parliament, in and out of Bahrain, freely expressing views critical of government policy — a right enshrined in Bahrain’s constitution and guaranteed by its laws,” the Information Affairs Authority (IAA) last month said.

On Wednesday, mourners clashed with police at the funeral for a 17-year-old boy whom authorities said died while carrying explosives. The official Bahrain News Agency said a gun and ammunition was found near the teen’s body. Authorities said he was wanted in connection with previous attacks.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-court-releases-al-wefaq-leader-khalil-marzouq-1.1246798>

- **Kuwait mosque fire suspect arrested**

Manama: A man who allegedly set fire to two mosques in the capital Kuwait City has

been arrested, the interior ministry has said.

The suspect has a criminal record and is known as a drug addict, a statement from the ministry media centre said. “The suspect has made full and detailed confessions about his act,” local Arabic daily Al Kuwaitiyah quoted the statement as saying on Thursday.

However, police said investigators were still trying to determine the reasons why the suspect set fire to the two mosques in the vibrant Salmiya neighbourhood.

No-one was injured in the two fires, but several lawmakers and government officials condemned them as a cowardly attack, amid concerns that it was driven by sectarian considerations

Reports said that initially seven people had been summoned as possible suspects in the two arson cases.

In a separate case in April, security authorities in Kuwait arrested a man who shattered the glass doors and windows of a mosque.

The 21-year-old was apprehended by policemen as he attempted a new post-midnight attack on Al Baharna Shiite mosque, the police said.

“The mosque was placed under constant monitoring and when the police noted on the surveillance cameras a young man carrying a stone getting close to the mosque, they apprehended him,” the police said. “During the quizzing, he confessed that he attacked the mosque on Friday and that he had also targeted the same religious building twice over the last two weeks.”

The police said that they found a video clip of the attacks on his mobile phone. However, the suspect denied there was a sectarian motivation behind the attacks and said that he was curious to observe how people reacted to his acts.

Reports said that the suspect attributed his attacks on the mosque to “voices telling him to do it”.

The attacks on Al Baharna Mosque sparked a robust show of unity between all leading political and religious figures in the country who issued statements condemning the act and warning against

attempts to sow divisions in the country along sectarian lines.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-mosque-fire-suspect-arrested-1.1246650>

- **Trial of Kuwait scholar in sectarian controversy postponed**



Manama: A court in Kuwait on Thursday adjourned the trial of local scholar Abdullah Al Nafissi on charges of targeting the Shiite sect and the country’s national unity to November 7.

The case was the first to be considered by the court under the national unity law and its provisions that stipulated penalties and fines, local news site Al Aan reported.

The prosecution allowed Al Nafissi, 68, to go home on a KD5,000 (Dh65,051.5) bail, but it prevented him from leaving the country.

The case against him had been brought by Shiite lawmakers who charged that the scholar attacked the Shiite sect in a lecture and pushed for the application of the anti-hatred law.

However, reports in Kuwait quoted Ali Al Naqi, the head of the political bureau of the Conservatives' Reform Movement, as stating that the speech by Al Nafissi did not include any attack on the Shiite sect. "We opted to lapse into silence until we could listen to the lecture," he posted in his Twitter account. "We listen to the full 55 minutes and there was nothing against the Shiites. There were information and analyses that could be right or wrong," he said in April.

<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/trial-of-kuwait-scholar-in-sectarian-controversy-postponed-1.1246984>

## 7. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Wave of bitter anger shakes rule of Islamists in Tunisia**



Protesters torch office of ruling Islamists in town of Kef, with strike in Sidi Bouzid and protests in capital Tunis, and city of Sfax.

Protesters on Thursday torched the office of Tunisia's ruling Islamists in the town of Kef, where a policeman killed in fighting with suspected jihadists was to be buried, a photographer reported.

The walls of the building were burned and equipment inside it destroyed, with witnesses saying protesters had ransacked the office in the morning.

The remains of charred documents and tyres were strewn in the road outside the building, occupied on the second floor by the ruling Ennahda movement.

The office is located just metres (yards) from the family home of one of six



policemen killed on Wednesday in a firefight with suspected jihadists.

The slain police were to be buried later Thursday in home towns around Tunisia, including in the central Sidi Bouzid region where Wednesday's clash broke out, amid rising anti-government sentiment.

"We have rejected plans by the government, the politicians to pay homage... We reject their condolences, their presence and above all the presence of (Prime Minister) Ali Larayedh," said Jamel Salhi, the brother of one of the victims, in Sidi Bouzid.

The powerful UGTT trade union confederation called a strike in the poor central region where the uprising that toppled strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 first began, and in nearby Kasserine.

Other protests were reported on Thursday in the capital Tunis, and the city of Sfax, 270 km southeast of Tunis.

President Moncef Marzouki has declared three days of national mourning for the men but their families have barred officials from attending the funerals.

"We have rejected plans by the government, the politicians to pay homage... We reject their condolences, their presence," said Jamel Salhi, the brother of one of the victims, in the central region of Sidi Bouzid.

The country's political transition has been paralysed for months, with the opposition accusing the Ennahda-led government of laxity in reining in jihadist groups.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62148>

- **Egypt Islamists mobilise to 'save' Morsi from justice**



Morsi's trial is expected to raise fresh tensions between new authorities in Egypt and his Islamist supporters.

An Islamist alliance backing Mohamed Morsi on Thursday urged its supporters to

protest on November 4 when the ousted president will be put on trial, raising fears of new clashes.

Morsi --held at an unknown location since the military ousted him on July 3 -- and 14 others have been charged in the killing of protesters outside his palace in December 2012.

The Anti-Coup Alliance "notes that the coup organisers would like to break the people's and the revolution's will" by trying Morsi and the others, the alliance led by Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood said.

"The alliance also calls on all free people in Egypt and abroad to stand by the revolutionary will opposing the military coup, and that all activities should be as they always have been -- within peaceful bounds that define our methods and strategy."

Morsi's trial is expected to raise fresh tensions between the new army-installed authorities and his supporters, who have mounted several protests against the military and its chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

On October 6, at least 57 people were killed nationwide, mostly in Cairo, when Morsi's supporters clashed with security forces as they tried to reach Tahrir Square, epicentre of the revolt that toppled Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

Security forces have been engaged in a sweeping crackdown since breaking up two pro-Morsi sit-ins in Cairo on August 14.

More than 1,000 people have been killed since then, and over 2,000 Islamists -- including Morsi and several top Muslim Brotherhood leaders -- have been detained across the country.

Prosecutors have charged Morsi with "inciting his supporters to commit premeditated murder" during December 5 clashes outside his palace.

The December fighting erupted when Muslim Brotherhood supporters dispersed a sit-in outside the palace by people angered over Morsi issuing a decree placing his decisions beyond judicial review. At least seven people were killed.

The Brotherhood claimed that most of those killed were Islamists, an assertion

disputed by its opponents. At least one of the victims was an anti-Morsi journalist.

Morsi and the co-defendants will stand trial before a Cairo district court.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62143>

- **Long legal battle of Gathafi aides begins in Libya**



A Libyan court indicted Thursday around 30 Moamer Gathafi aides, including the slain dictator's son Seif al-Islam, for a raft of alleged offences during the 2011 revolt, prosecutors said.

The indictments clear the way for what will be the most high-profile trial in the country's history, with defendants also including former intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senussi and Gathafi's last prime minister. Baghdadi al-Mahmudi.

Gathafi himself was captured and killed by rebels outside his hometown of Sirte after an eight-month revolt against his four-decade rule backed by NATO air strikes.

"The court ordered they stand trial on the main charges against them dealing with the repression of the 2011 revolt," prosecutors' office spokesman Seddik al-Sour said after the hearing.

"The trial date will be set by the Tripoli criminal court," Sour told a press conference.

The charges pressed against the defendants include murder, kidnapping, complicity in incitement to rape, plunder, sabotage, embezzlement of public funds and acts harmful to national unity.

Only a dozen of the accused appeared in court, said a lawyer who was present at the hearing, held under tight security at a Tripoli court and prison building.

Sour said the law did not require that the defendants all be in court to hear the indictment.

The fact that "some of the defendants would have needed exceptional security

measures to appear prompted the court to decide to notify them of its decision after the hearing."

"But the presence of all the accused will be obligatory at the trial hearings before the criminal court," Sour said.

At a pre-trial hearing in September, lawyers already pleaded not guilty to all the accusations levelled by the prosecution.

The court had the authority to accept the charges sought by prosecutors, dismiss them or ask for more evidence.

It examined some 40,000 documents and 4,000 pages of interrogation transcripts in a process lasting several weeks.

Seif al-Islam did not appear at any of the three pre-trial hearings.

He is in the custody of a former rebel militia in the hill town of Zintan, southwest of the capital, where he was taken after his capture in November 2011.

Judges have ordered his transfer to Tripoli, so far without success, in a symptom of the limited authority of the post-Gathafi

central government two years after the dictator's overthrow.

Seif al-Islam is still wanted for trial by the International Criminal Court in The Hague on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity connected with the uprising.

The ICC had also originally sought to try Senussi but ruled on October 11 that the former spy chief, now 63, should be tried by Libya, the first time it has deferred a case to a national judiciary.

Senussi's lawyers have appealed against that ruling, arguing that Libya is "unable and unwilling genuinely to conduct fair proceedings" against him.

"He has been detained in Libya for nearly 13 months without access to any lawyer despite his repeated requests to see a lawyer... he is cut off from the world and has been denied family visits and telephone calls," lawyer Ben Emmerson said in a letter to the court released last week.

But the Libyan prosecutors' spokesman dismissed such concerns on Thursday.

"Libya's justice system has shown that it is capable of holding fair trials," he said.

Senussi also stands accused of ordering the massacre of hundreds of political prisoners in Abu Selim jail in 1996.

Relatives of those killed demonstrated outside the court building again on Thursday holding up pictures of their dead loved ones and demanding that Senussi face the death penalty.

But Sour said that case would be the subject of a separate trial.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62142>

- **Leading reformer faces ouster from Sudan ruling party**



KHARTOUM - A leading reformer in Sudan's ruling party should be ousted after he criticised a deadly crackdown on

protests, an internal investigative committee said on Thursday.

The National Congress Party (NCP) set up the body after comments by former presidential adviser Ghazi Salahuddin Atabani and 30 other prominent party reformers.

In a memorandum to President Omar al-Bashir, the reformists said the government's response to late-September demonstrations over fuel price hikes betrayed the regime's Islamic foundations.

They made a series of recommendations, including for an independent probe of the shooting of civilians during the protests, and for a reversal of the price increases.

Instead, they found themselves under investigation by the party.

Atabani's membership and that of two other signatories will be revoked if a 400-member party council gives final approval, said Ahmed Ibrahim al-Tahir, who led the internal probe.

He said six others who signed the memorandum have been suspended from party activities for one year.

They violated party rules by setting up a "parallel organisation" and by communicating with other political parties without NCP approval, Tahir said.

He added that the memorandum came at an inappropriate time, on September 27, when security forces were struggling against "criminals" and party unity was required.

"This was not a time to raise such a memorandum," said Tahir, who is speaker of parliament.

Atabani, a member of parliament, said on Monday that his party membership had already been suspended but the reformers would not back down.

He said the NCP was spending too much time on "this minor internal issue at a time when the country is on the verge of collapse."

Thousands of people, many of them Khartoum-area poor, took to the streets when the government cut fuel subsidies, forcing retail prices up by more than 60 percent.

Dozens were killed.

Bashir said the protests were part of an effort to end his 24-year rule, using "agents, thieves and hijackers".

In their memorandum, the reformers said the government's economic measures were not presented to parliament and citizens had no chance to give input peacefully.

They called for "professionals" to take over economic policy assisted by members of other political parties.

The memorandum also sought an end to press censorship, and respect for constitutional freedoms including peaceful assembly.

Even before the September demonstrations, critics within the NCP had raised concerns including over alleged corruption and a drift from Islamic values.

"We cannot ignore that our party needs reform," Tahir said, adding that a committee will bring proposals for change to the NCP's congress next year.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=62160>

- **Benghazi violence mars Liberation Day**



While a number of Libyan cities commemorated the anniversary of liberating the country from Kadhafi's 42-year grip, the cradle of revolution refused to celebrate.

Benghazi residents and activists said there was nothing to celebrate, so long as citizens were being killed and threatened every day by unknown persons.

In the latest violence, a senior air force officer was assassinated on Thursday morning (October 24th), according to AFP. Colonel Adel Khalil al-Tawahi was shot in the head and chest outside of his home.

A day earlier, on the morning of the liberation anniversary, Benghazi woke up to news of assassination of Osama al-

Fitouri, a young man working for the Arabian Gulf Oil Company. He was shot in the head near al-Majouri clinic at 7:45am while he was on his way to work.

Eyewitnesses said assailants in a Hyundai opened fire on the victim and fled.

The attack was not the only one of its type to mar the holiday. Another body was found Tuesday evening near the Ozo Hotel in central Benghazi. Investigations did not reveal why the two young men were killed.

Special operation forces in Benghazi also defused a time bomb planted at al-Keesh post office in a residential building complex on Wednesday after a citizen informed the authorities.

Meanwhile, an unknown armed group attacked Gar Younis police station. An exchange of fire ensued between policemen and attackers, leaving one policeman dead.

"I was expecting that Libya as a whole, not just Benghazi, wouldn't celebrate," said Belkacem al-Sahati, 48, a poet.

"Why should we celebrate? What have we achieved other than expanding our graveyards to accommodate for this big number of martyrs who are falling now?" he asked.

"Is it for a country that is sinking in blood, divisions and discord? How can we celebrate while a large section of the people is displaced either at home or abroad? Unfortunately, we haven't realised anything worthy of celebration," al-Sahati continued. "On this day, we just pray for mercy for the martyrs and for patience for their mothers who miss them. As to us, we have gone off course and deviated from our religion, habits and traditions, and not just from the revolution."

In his turn, Maraey al-Hassi, a 44-year old employee, said, "Given what's happening on a daily basis here in terms of assassinations and security chaos, there is a general feeling in the Benghazi street that the revolution has been stolen, and that none of the demands for which young men had died has been met."

"I was almost sure that the people of Benghazi wouldn't celebrate that

anniversary because of the blood that is shed every day," al-Hassi added.

"Many Libyans are convinced that the country has not been liberated at all, given militia control over decision-making," he told Magharebia.

Mahmoud Ali, a 45-year-old employee at the river administration, sarcastically said, "Those who have the right to celebrate the alleged Liberation Day are the criminals who were released from prisons at the start of revolution."

[http://magharebia.com/en\\_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/10/24/feature-01](http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/a/wi/features/2013/10/24/feature-01)

- **Warraq church shooting claims fifth victim: sources**



Sunday's Warraq church shooting in north Cairo has claimed its fifth victim, after 17-year-old Mohamed Ibrahim died from his



injuries in hospital on Thursday, a security source revealed.

Ibrahim suffered a gunshot wound to his abdomen, the source said, and died in Nasser Institute Hospital on Thursday.

Unidentified gunmen attacked the church on Sunday during a wedding ceremony and shot indiscriminately while guests walked out of the church. Four people died, including two minors, while 18 others were wounded, including three Muslims.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/warraq-church-shooting-claims-fifth-victim-sources>

- **Moussa, Sisi discuss army's part in Constitution behind closed doors: sources**



Amr Moussa and Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi discussed constitutional

articles relating to Egypt's armed forces in a closed-door meeting, according to sources inside the Constituent Assembly, which Moussa heads.

The meeting follows disputes over articles related to the Egyptian judiciary, prompting members of the 10-person constitutional committee to withdraw.

Interim President Adly Mansour has called for consensus amongst different parties in the amendment vodies, according to sources, in attempts to overcome difficulties Egypt is currently making its way through.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/moussa-sisi-discuss-army-s-part-constitution-behind-closed-doors-sources>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **Afghan policemen die in nighttime raid**



Four Afghan policemen have been killed in a militant attack on a security outpost in the western province of Badghis.

The nighttime attack was carried out in Bla Murghab District, where Taliban militants tried to storm the security outpost, said provincial police chief Sharafuddin Sharaf on Thursday.

He also stated that three Afghan policemen sustained injures in the gunfight that lasted about three hours.

There have been no reports of Taliban casualties.

On October 22, two separate militant attacks claimed the lives of at least eight Afghan soldiers and injured several others in different regions of the war-ravaged country.

In late April, the Taliban announced the start of their annual offensive against US-led and Afghan forces.

The militant group said it would use “every possible tactic” to inflict casualties on Afghan and US-led forces. They specifically mentioned insider attacks.

The increasing number of military casualties in Afghanistan has caused widespread anger in the United States and other NATO member states, undermining public support for the Afghan war.

The US and its allies invaded Afghanistan in 2001 as part of Washington’s so-called war on terror. The offensive removed the Taliban from power, but the country is still gripped by insecurity.

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

- **Afghan conflicts leave 11 dead, 15 injured**

Taliban-led activities and Afghan forces retaliations have left 11 people including six militants and five policemen dead and 15 others including nine insurgents injured

since Wednesday night, officials said Thursday.

The Taliban fighters, according to police, raided a police checkpoint in the mountainous Balamirghab district of Badghis province with Qala-e-Naw as its capital 555 km northwest of the national capital Kabul late Wednesday night, leaving four police dead.

"Taliban rebels attacked a checkpoint of local police in Balamirghab district late last night and police returned fire. The firefight lasted for a while during which four police and two Taliban rebels were killed," provincial police chief Sharafudin Sharaf told Xinhua.

Three policemen and two militants sustained injuries in the firefight, he added.

In a related violent incident in the northern Baghlan province Wednesday night, one police and four Taliban fighters lost their lives, police confirmed.

"The clash between police and Taliban rebels erupted late Wednesday night in Baghlan-e-Markazi district of Baghlan province during which one police

constable and four Taliban rebels were killed," a police officer in the province, Burhanudin Zahid, told newsmen Thursday.

Three police and seven Taliban militants sustained injuries in the clash, he added.

Zabihullah Mujahid who claims to speak for the Taliban outfit in talks with media via telephone from unknown location confirmed the conflict, saying only one Taliban fighter was killed in the gun battle which lasted for few hours.

Taliban militants challenging the Afghan government and NATO- led forces stationed in Afghanistan have speed up activities since they launched the so-called spring offensive in May this year.

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

- **Feature: In Kabul, orphaned children are forced to support their families**

It may not be true in urban cities in other parts of the world for children to work in order to support their families, but in this capital city, it is not unusual.

Shapoor, 9, is one of these poor Afghan children who are forced to toil the whole day in the streets of Kabul to earn bread for their families.

"I have no choice but to work, sometimes from dawn to dusk to earn and support my family," Shapoor, who like many Afghans has only one name, told Xinhua.

Street children like Shapoor are doing odd jobs, from selling shopping bags and toilet paper to polishing shoes and washing car. These Afghan children are forced to work when they are supposed to be in school or at play.

"In addition to washing cars, selling shopping bags and polishing shoes, sometimes I scavenge from garbage bins to find usable goods to sell," Shapoor said.

"Since the death of my father in a bomb blast two years ago the responsibility of feeding my family rested on me and that is why I have to work hard," Shapoor said.

Shapoor said that his father, along with several others, was killed in a suicide bomb attack in Kabul two years ago. Since then, he has been doing jobs fit for older

people just so he can support his mother and four siblings.

Shapoor remembered that his father wanted him to become a doctor but this is no longer possible.

"Usually I earn around 350 Afghanis (1 U.S. dollar equals 57 Afghanis) daily to support my mother, three sisters, my younger brother and myself," the 9-year-old boy said.

Nonetheless, Shapoor has continued his schooling in a government school where he is in grade three though sometimes he has to skip classes to work in the streets.

Several other Afghan children also work in Kabul streets, some of them in the markets and malls, carrying bags of shoppers or running errands for customers.

The unabated fighting in Afghanistan, perpetrated by militant groups such as the Taliban, has resulted in thousands of deaths and forced children like Shapoor to work to earn a living.

It is young Afghans like Shapoor who are suffering the most in a senseless war that

they could never understand why it is happening.

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

- **No US aid until BSA inked, Karzai told**



WASHINGTON (PAN): The United States will not be able to provide any assistance to Afghanistan until the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) between the two countries is signed, a top American senator has told President Hamid Karzai.

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin conveyed this message to Karzai at a meeting in Kabul during his week-long trip to the country, the senator's office said.

"I told President Karzai that we will not be able to provide such assistance unless an acceptable Bilateral Security Agreement is reached in the near future and also

stressed that his words have too often not been helpful to promote confidence between our countries," Levin said.

The lawmaker added he was struck by positive changes in Afghanistan since he first started visiting the country about 12 years ago and how the improvement had accelerated in the last three years.

"Afghanistan is more secure, and of greatest importance perhaps, it is the Afghan Army and police who now have responsibility for preserving security and they are doing so far more successfully and quickly than many predicted," Levin said.

"You see streets full of cars, new buildings going up, new universities (including the American University of Afghanistan, which we visited), and a high level of energy and engagement from the people of Afghanistan – including women, who had been completely excluded from public life by the Taliban," he said.

"I believe that the continued assistance and engagement of the United States and other countries is warranted and will help preserve these achievements," Levin said at the conclusion of his Afghan trip

<http://www.pajhwok.com/dr/2013/10/25/no-us-aid-until-bsa-inked-karzai-told>

- **US drone strikes secretly endorsed by Pakistan: Report**

Pakistan secretly endorsed CIA's covert drone attack in its tribal regions for years despite repeated denouncement of the campaign.

The Washington Post in its latest report has revealed that CIA and Pakistani documents indicate CIA used Pakistani airstrips in the early years of the campaign.

In the meantime another media agency, National Journal has reported that Pakistani authorities have approved many of the drone strikes, based on a secret agreement which is in place since the administrations of George W. Bush and Pervez Musharraf.

Former Pakistani ambassador to Washington, Hussain Haqqani quoted by

National Journal said, Pakistani intelligence made a practice of "protesting against the drones publicly while privately negotiating over whom the drones would target."

This comes as Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his meeting with the US president Barack Obama on Wednesday urged the US should drone strikes in Pakistan.

Sharif told reporters after meeting with Obama in the Oval Office, "I brought up the issue of drones in our meeting, emphasizing the need for an end to such strikes."

Obama welcomed Sharif to the White House after releasing \$1.6 billion in aid — mostly for the military — that had been blocked amid high tensions over the 2011 raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

"I'm confident that, working together, we can achieve a goal that is good for Afghanistan, but also helps to protect Pakistan over the long term," Obama told

reporters at the Oval Office without discussing on Nawaz Sharif's call to end drone strikes.

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

*\*This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Firuze Yağmur Gökler**. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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