

**MIDDLE EAST / SOUTH ASIA DAILY BULLETIN**

**GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU / GÜNEY ASYA BÜLTENİ**

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## 1. IRAQ / IRAK

- U.S. President Barack Obama on Thursday welcomed the report presented by General Ray Odierno in which asserts that security incidents across Iraq remain at the lowest level, calling on Iraqi leaders to speed up forming the new government, according to a statement of the White House.

“Obama met with Commander of U.S. forces in Iraq Ray Odierno and Ambassador Chris Hill in the White House, discussing development in Iraq and the drawdown of U.S. forces there,” said the statement received by Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

According to the White House, Hill and Odierno provided Obama with an update on the status of Iraqi negotiations to form a new government, the security situation on the ground, and the drawdown of U.S. forces leading up to the end of combat mission at the end of August.

Odierno reported that security incidents across Iraq remain at the lowest level since the United States has kept records, and the U.S. forces are ahead of schedule in executing the planned drawdown to 50,000 troops by the end of August.

The U.S. forces last year pulled out of Iraqi cities and are working to formally end combat operations by Sept. 1 this year, cutting the U.S. military force from just under 90,000 to 50,000. A full withdrawal is also in sight at the end of 2011.

Odierno on Wednesday said the main challenges left for Iraq’s independence are political unity and financial solvency. Iraq’s political blocs are still discussing the formation of a new government, months after the March 7 elections.

During the meeting on Thursday, Obama said it is time for Iraq’s leaders to form a government without delay.

In a sign of impatience with Iraq’s prolonged negotiations to form a government, Vice President Joe Biden on Thursday called Iraqi political leaders, urging them to form “without delay” a government. He spoke with Iraqi Prime Minister and State of Law

leader Nouri al-Maliki and with former prime minister and al-Iraqiya leader Iyad Allawi. (Aswat al-Iraq)

- U.S. Vice President Joe Biden called on Iraqi politicians to form a comprehensive government, according to a statement of his office.

This came during two phone calls with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and Head of al-Iraqiya List Iyad Allawi.

“He discussed with the two officials the latest political developments in Iraq,” the statement added.

Biden reiterated his call to form a comprehensive government, expressing support to the current efforts exerted by the Iraqi leaders to form the government.

“I don’t want to debate history here, but I never called for a partition,” Biden had said. “I called for a central government with considerable autonomy in the regions.”

Biden, who was assigned to follow up the Iraqi file, had visited Iraq earlier this month, to revive the political process in the country. (Aswat al-Iraq)

- The U.S. is on track to drawdown its force level in Iraq to 50,000 by August 31, as scheduled, but will maintain that robust level through summer 2011, Gen. Ray Odierno, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq, said.

But for the next 17 months, as U.S. forces move toward withdrawing completely by December 31, 2011, per an agreement with the Iraqi government, Odierno has asked his staff to look into shortening remaining deployment times of American units in Iraq to nine months.

The Baghdad staff will work with the Joint Staff and the Army, he said, to see if the change would be “a better fit” for the timetable.

“If we can do it, we’ll do it,” he said.

Odierno also said that U.S. units deployed to Kirkuk would probably be among the last units to come out, given the importance of stability in the north. (Aswat al-Iraq)

- Three civilians were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack while another was killed by unidentified gunmen fire in two separate incidents in Mosul city on Thursday, according to a security source.

“An IED went off near an Iraqi army patrol in al-Maarif neighborhood, northern Mosul, leaving three civilians, including a man and his son, wounded,” the source told Aswat al-Iraq news agency.

“Also in Mosul a civilian man was shot down by unidentified gunmen fire on the main street in Tal al-Rimman area, western Mosul,” he said.

The gunmen managed to escape after their attack, the source added, not revealing the identity of the victim or other details related to the attack.

Ninewa a hotspot in Iraq that is the scene of attacks nearly on a daily basis leaving civilians and security personnel killed or wounded. Mosul, the capital city of the province, lies 405 km north of Baghdad. (Aswat al-Iraq)

- A rocket attack on Baghdad's fortified Green Zone killed two Ugandans and a Peruvian working for a U.S. security contractor hired to protect U.S. facilities in Iraq, the U.S. embassy said. Fifteen people, two of them American, were wounded in the attack.

Iraqi security forces found the body of a teacher shot in his house in Al Ghadir region, a security source said.

Gunmen opened fire on Thursday on an army checkpoint in central Baghdad, a source from the Interior Ministry said. The attack wounded an officer, the source added.

A roadside bomb near a café in Al Iskandariya wounded nine people. Two mortar rounds wounded three civilians in Abu Dsheir District, southern Baghdad.

In Al Madaen District, a bomb explosion wounded three people. (Al Sumeria TV)

- The United States plans to draw down its vast diplomatic presence in Iraq in the 3-5 years after the US military leaves at the end of 2011, the likely next US ambassador to Iraq Jim Jeffrey said.

Washington would need to do "a lot of diplomatic work" to get Iraq "fully plugged into" regional relationships, Jeffrey told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The United States will ultimately rely on an embassy in Baghdad, two consulates, and a special office to coordinate military sales and training of Iraqi security forces, he added.  
(Al Sumeria TV)

- The US military withdrawal from Iraq is on schedule with only 50,000 troops set to remain by August 31, top US commander in Iraq General Raymond Odierno said Wednesday.

General Ray Odierno spoke to reporters in Washington, where he was meeting State Department officials to discuss the drawdown and the transition to a more civilian mission.

"There is uneasiness" among Iraqis because a government has not yet been formed, Odierno said, "but there has been no degradation in terms of security."

"I would be concerned if a government has not been formed by October," he admitted.  
(Al Sumeria TV)

- Irak Adalet Bakanı Bağdat'ta bulunan zinadalardan birinden El Kaide üyesi 4 mahkumun firar ettiğini duyurdu.

Frasn Prese konuşan Irak Adalet Bakanı Dara Nurettin bir kaç gün önce Bağdat'ta bir zında tutuklu bulunan Elkaide üyesi 4 mahkûmun firar ettiğini açıkladı.

Mahkûmların kaçmasının ardından Hapishane müdürü de kayıpları karıştı ancak , Bakan kaçanlara içerden yardım yapıldığını kabul etmek istemedi.

Kaçan Mahkûmlar Kamp Krober hapisanesinden kaçtılar ki Amerikanın kontrolünde olan hapisane kısa bir süre önce Irak'a teslim edilmişti. (Peyamner News Agency-PNA)

- Irak İslam Yüksek Konseyi, Talabani'nin ikinci kez Cumhurbaşkanlığı adaylığını desteklemesinin, Kürdistan Gruplar Koalisyonu'nun Ulusal Koalisyonun başbakan adayını desteklemekle ilgisinin olmadığını söyledi.

Ulusal Koalisyon çatısı altındaki Irak İslam Yüksek Konseyi Başkan Müsteşarı Basım el-Avvadi, AKnews'e yaptığı açıklamada, konsey ve koalisyonun makam takası yapmayacağını, Talabani'nin ikinci kez Cumhurbaşkanlığı adaylığını desteklemeleri ile Kürdistan Gruplar Koalisyonu'nun Ulusal Koalisyonun başbakanlık adayını desteklemekle ilgisi olmadığını vurguladı.

Bugünkü aşamada, Cumhurbaşkanlığı için Talabani'yi en uygun ve en kabiliyetli aday olarak gördüklerini kaydeden el-Avvadi, "Talabani geçen dönemde iyi bir rol oynadı, gelecek dönemde de aynı rolü oynayacağına inanıyoruz" dedi.

Makamlar için adayları desteklemek konusun standartlara bağlı olması gerektiğini ve Cumhurbaşkanlığı görevini alacak kişinin yurt içinde ve bölgede kabul görmesi gerektiğini belirten el-Avvadi, "Ulusal Koalisyon ve özellikle İslam Yüksek Konseyi, Kürdistan Gruplar Koalisyonu'na çok yakındır. Taraflar arasındaki görüşmeler kesilmeden devam ediyor" ifadesini kullandı.

Dün İslam Yüksek Konseyi yöneticilerinden ve Cumhurbaşkanı Yardımcısı Adil Abdulmehdi'nin evinde bir araya gelen Kürdistan Gruplar Koalisyonu ve İslam Yüksek Konseyi temsilcileri hiçbir tarafı dışlamadan milli ve ortaklık temeline dayalı bir hükümetin kurulması gerektiğini vurgulamışlardı.

Bağdat'ta Kürtlerin ortak bir tutum sergilemelerini sağlamak üzere oluşturulan Kürdistan Grupları Koalisyonu, siyasi taraflarla yaptığı hükümet kurma müzakerelerinde, Talabani'nin ikinci kez cumhurbaşkanı olmasını şart koşuyor.(PNA)

- Irak Yüksek İslam Şurası İrana Nuri Maliki'nin yeniden başbakan olmasını kabul etmeyeceklerini, çok açık bir şekilde ifade etmişti.

Irak Ulusal İtilafı'ndan bir kaynak açık bir şekilde listelerini Maliki'nin yeniden Başbakan olmasına karşı olduğunu, çünkü bu yeniden seçilme Listemizin çıkarlarını gözyumması sayesinde olacaktır. Bunun da mümkün olmadığını belirtti.

Kaynak İran'ın Sadıra çok fazla baskı yaptığını ancak Sadırın tavrından taviz vermediğini ve vermeyeceğini dile getirdi.

Kaynak Şuanda Maliki için kapısını çalacağı sadece Kürt'ler olduğunu ve Kürdistan Kalisyonu'n Ulusal İtifak ve Irakiye'nin içinde yer almadığı bir hükümeti destekleyeceğine inanmadığını, ve özellikle Kürdistan Bölge Başkanı Mesud Barzani'n Allavi ve ElHekimin içinde yer almadığı bir hükümete katılacağına ihtimal vermediğini açıkladı. (PNA)

- Three private security contractors working for the US government in the heavily fortified green zone in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, have been killed in a rocket attack.

"Two Ugandans and one Peruvian were killed and 15 people injured" by "a rocket fired into the international zone," the American embassy said in a statement, using another name for the green zone in central Baghdad.

"All of the dead and injured worked for a US government security contractor which protects US government facilities in Iraq ... two of the injured were American citizens," the embassy said on Thursday.

The dead and wounded all worked for Triple Canopy, a contractor based in Herndon, Virginia, founded by US special-forces veterans.

The green zone, which houses Iraqi government buildings, and several major embassies in addition to US interests, is the target of frequent rocket and mortar attacks.

US officials declined to say exactly where the rocket landed, but an Iraqi police source said it struck near the sprawling US embassy complex.

US forces handed full responsibility for "entry control points" that regulate movement into and out of the area to Iraqi authorities on June 1, 2010.

US draw-down

Ceding control over entry points is part of the US draw-down, which will see troop numbers in Iraq cut from about 70,000 today to 50,000 by the end of August, ahead of a full withdrawal planned for 2012.

As part of the draw-down, US forces gave Iraqis control over the prison formerly known as Camp Cropper last week.

Four "terrorist" detainees with alleged links to al-Qaeda have since escaped from the prison on the outskirts of Baghdad, Dara Nurreddin Dara, Iraq's justice minister, said on Thursday.

"They escaped two days ago," Dara said, adding that the prison's warden has also gone missing. He declined to say whether the warden was involved with the escape.

"An investigation is being carried out in order to find out what mistakes were made and who helped them," Dara said.

The disappearance of men "accused under anti-terrorism laws" is seen as a major embarrassment for the Iraqi government.

The US has refused to comment on the escape. (Al Jazeera)

## 2. IRAN / İRAN

- Lieutenant Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) General Hossein Salami underlined Iran's self-sufficiency and remarkable progresses in different fields, and said that the country is prepared to survive the harshest sanctions and boycotts.

"We can resist against toughest sanctions and meet our demands," Salami said in a meeting with military attaches of foreign countries in Iran on Thursday.

"Despite pressure and sanctions against Iran, we move forward day by day...Today the Islamic establishment is capable of defending its cultural, political and religious thoughts," he said.

Salami also pointed to the plots of the enemies of the Islamic Revolution over the past 30 years, and praised the "firm" resistance of the Iranian nation against them.

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 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.

In a solid response to the fourth UNSC sanctions resolution issued against Iran on June 9, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad played down effectiveness of the new sanctions, and stressed that the measure cannot inflict any damage on the Iranian nation. (Fars News Agency-FNA)

- The UN Security Council sanctions resolutions and the unilateral boycotts imposed by certain western countries against Iran will bear no fruit, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said.

"The path of the resolutions will bear absolutely no fruit," Larijani said in a meeting with Japanese Speaker of the House of Representatives Takahiro Yokomichi in Geneva on Wednesday.

Iran is under four rounds of UN Security Council sanctions for turning down West's calls to give up its right of uranium enrichment, saying the demand is politically tainted and illogical.

Elsewhere, Larijani said that the US-driven sanctions against Iran breached the nuclear fuel swap deal named 'the Tehran Declaration' and a Washington pledge to commit to any such deal.

He described Tehran's declaration on a possible nuclear fuel swap deal as the only solution to the nuclear issue, and said it was the product of negotiations held in Japan earlier in February.

"After those discussions, Iran made certain efforts as a result of which the Tehran declaration was issued which came as a clear sign of our positive cooperation," the Iranian speaker said.

Iran, Brazil and Turkey issued a joint nuclear fuel swap declaration on May 17, based on which Tehran agreed to exchange 1,200 kg of its low-enriched uranium on Turkish soil with fuel for its Tehran research reactor.

The US and its European allies snubbed the declaration and, in less than a month after its announcement by the Tehran government, the UN Security Council imposed a fourth round of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear work.

"If the Tehran declaration is fully implemented many issues will be resolved completely," Larijani cautioned.

During Larijani's earlier visit to Tokyo, Japan offered to enrich uranium for Iran seeking to allay international concerns that Iran might be pursuing military objectives in its nuclear program.

The enriched uranium would be used at Tehran's research reactor to produce medical isotopes.

Iran, a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, says its nuclear program is directed at the civilian applications of the technology. (FNA)

- Iran's Deputy Permanent Envoy to the United Nations Eshaq Ale-Habib lambasted the western countries' continued support for the crimes committed by the Zionist regime

against the oppressed Palestinian people, and warned about a human catastrophe in the region.

Ale-Habib lashed out at Western countries for their "full-fledged support" for Israel in its continuous campaign for committing crimes against the Palestinian community.

"What encourages the Zionist regime in continuing its crimes is the West's full-fledged support for this regime," Iranian diplomat Eshaq Alehabib told a UN Security Council meeting on Palestine on Wednesday.

The Iranian official said that the problem in the Middle East was not the lack of a peace plan but the lack of a clear understanding of the causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, along with the continuation of Israeli crimes and the imposition of various constraints on the Palestinians.

Alehabib went on to explain that all such issues have together caused a "humanitarian catastrophe" in the region.

The Iranian envoy added that the only solution to the conflict in the Middle East was putting an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territory and observing the rights of the Palestinians.

He criticized the Israeli excavations near the al-Aqsa Mosque, the destruction of Palestinians' homes, and the construction of new Israeli settlements, saying that such measures were part of efforts by Israel to wipe out the Islamic and cultural identity of the Palestinian community.

Turning to Lebanon, the Iranian envoy slammed Israel's repeated violations of the Lebanese territory.

The condemnation comes as Israeli jets violate the Lebanese airspace on a regular basis, breaking the sound barrier over certain regions in the country.

The United Nations considers Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace as breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which brought an end to the Israeli offensive against Lebanon in 2006. (FNA)

- Iran's parliament announced that it plans to dispatch a delegation of legislators to Gaza next week to help the oppressed Palestinian people who have been suffering an Israeli-imposed siege for more than three years.

Member of the parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Mahmoud Ahmadi Biqash said on Wednesday that the lawmakers will arrive in Gaza on July 27.

Biqash, who will head the four-member delegation, said the other Iranian MPs who will accompany him to Gaza are Avaz Heydarpour, Parviz Sarouri, and Shobayb Jouyjari.

"We will arrive in Gaza by travelling through Egypt and its Rafah border crossing," he stated.

Biqash added that the Iranian parliamentary delegation will also hold talks with officials of the Egyptian parliament and administration.

"We intend to express our support for the people of Gaza," the Iranian legislator said.  
(FNA)

- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani urged Pakistani officials to take stricter counter-terrorism measures and cooperate with the Islamic Republic in eradicating terrorism in the region.

"Iran expects Pakistan's security services to seriously cooperate" with the Islamic Republic to eradicate terrorism, Larijani said during a meeting with his Pakistani counterpart Fehmida Mirza on Wednesday, one week after two deadly bombings in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Balouchestan killed at least 27 people and injured more than 270 others.

Larijani said that Pakistan needed to stop militants from crossing into Iran where they carry out such terrorist attacks.

He said that Iran and Pakistan enjoyed "amicable" ties but certain elements sought to "damage" these relations through carrying out acts such as the Zahedan terrorist attack.

The Pakistan speaker, for her part, said that terrorists need to be decisively dealt with, and called on the international community to support Islamabad's fight against terrorism.

Iran has repeatedly urged Pakistan to stop terrorists from entering the country and to cooperate in tracking down terrorists.

Political sources said that the Pakistan-based Jundollah terrorist group, which has been directly sponsored and supported by Washington, has claimed responsibility for the Zahedan attacks.

Iranian authorities had earlier presented evidence to Islamabad that showed links between Pakistani intelligence services and the Jundollah terrorist group.

The documents were based on the confessions made by Abdolhamid Rigi, the brother of the ringleader of Jundollah, who was hanged a few months ago

Jundollah is responsible for several terrorist operations which have killed tens of citizens and security forces. In 2007, Jundollah kidnapped 30 people in Sistan and Balouchestan province and took them to Pakistan. (FNA)

- Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari reiterated that the IRGC and the Basij (volunteer) forces are always prepared to defend and safeguard the Islamic Revolution.

"Safeguarding the Islamic Revolution is the philosophy behind the existence of the IRGC and Basij, since otherwise the Islamic system and the sacred land has lots of defenders, such as the IRI Army, the disciplinary forces, and the intelligence officers, so from that point of the view there would have been no need for the existence of the Revolutionary Guards, or the mobilization forces of the revolution," Jafari said on Wednesday.

"Some people insist in saying that the IRGC and the Basij forces are, and should be merely military forces, but the Supreme Leader emphasizes that Basij is not a military force and the Revolutionary Guards, too, are not merely military force and have other responsibilities at cultural, political, and security fields," he added.

"It is right that we should always be ready for confrontation with any possible threat, but that is readiness based on foreign defense and security patterns," the Iranian General said.

"Readiness of the entire forces is needed so that if the country is invaded from outside or problems would emerge from this corner and that part of the society, they would confront them effectively, but that is not enough," he underlined.

He reiterated, "If we would merely suffice in doing that and if we would have such an approach towards the Islamic Revolution our deviation from the right path would begin from that point, because the enemy is not merely supposed to deprive us of our revolution merely through staging wars, or posing semi-hard threats and insecurity," Jafari said. (FNA)

- Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazzemi arrived in Ankara to confer with Turkish officials on ways to expand bilateral relations and mutual cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

"I'm here at an invitation extended by Turkey's Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yildiz for expansion of relations in various hydrocarbon products' fields, including oil, natural gas and petrochemical products, as well as refinery industries and doing trade and exchanging ideas with Turkish state and private sector partners," Mir-Kazzemi said upon arrival in Ankara on Wednesday night.

Pointing out that Iran and Turkey have had a long record of negotiations and cooperation in the field of energy, he said, "Therefore, the two countries' concerned ministries hold talks once every couple of months."

"At these sessions sometimes new topics, too, are put forth, along with talks on formerly reached agreements and implementation of signed contracts," he added.

"One of the objectives pursued at these meetings is elimination of the probable problems and created obstacles in the way of expansion of bilateral ties in energy field

and my visit of Turkey provides an opportunity for top officials of Iran and Turkey to exchange ideas in the field," Mir-Kazemi concluded.

Iran and Turkey have in recent years boosted their cooperation in different fields of economy, security, trade, education, energy and culture.

Turkish Minister of Agriculture and Village Affairs Mehmet Mehdi Eker announced in May that the volume of trade exchanges between Iran and his country has increased to \$5.5bln.

Both Iranian and Turkish officials are striving hard to boost the two states' annual trade volume to \$20bln. (FNA)

- İran İslami Şura Meclisi Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politika Komisyonu üyesi Mustafa Kevakebian, ABD ile müzakere zemini hazır olmadığını ifade etti.

Mehr haber ajansının bildirdiğine göre, ABD kongresinin İran ile müzakere önerisi hususunu değerlendiren Musfata Kevakebian, ABD ile müzakere zemini hazır olmadığını söylerken, bunun için taraflardan ön şartlar ortaya konulmaması gerektiğini ifade etti.

Kevakebian, İslam İnkılabı Rehberi'nin sözlerine atıfta bulunarak, kadife eldivenin içinde çelik eller olduğu takdirde bu müzakereler gerçekleşemeyeceğini hatırlattı.

İslami Şura Meclisi Ulusal Güvenlik ve Dış Politika Komisyonu üyesi,"Amerikalılar bir yandan Halkın Mücahitleri(Münafıkları) terörist örgütünü terör listesinden çıkartıyorlar ve diğer yandan İran ile müzakere talep ediyorlar. Bu çifte standart davranış kabul edilemez"dedi. (Mehr News Agency-MNA)

- Önceki gün Tahran'ın Nur Camii'nde İslam İnkılabı Rehberi'nin özel kalem başkanı Hüccetülislam Muhammedi Gülpaigani'nin katılımıyla Allame Ayetullah Seyyid Muhammed Hüseyin Fadlullah'ın anma töreni düzenlendi.

Mehr haber ajansı muhabirinin bildirdiğine göre, Perşembe gününde düzenlenen bu törene İran'ın üst düzey yetkililerinin yanı sıra Allame Fadlullah'ın büyük oğlu

Hüccetülislam Seyyid Ali Fadlullah, müslüman ülkelerin diplomatları, Lübnan ve Filistin'in bazı kuruluş temsilcileri de katılmışlardı.

Bu tören Dünya Ehli Beyt ve Subh-i Garib'in öncülüğünde İslam İnkılabı Rehberi'nin mesajıyla başlarken Necef'ten gelen heyet başkanı Kazım el Hüseyini ve Hüccetülislam Seyyid Ali Fadlullah'ın konuşmalarıyla devam etti. (MNA)

- İran İslami Şura meclisi başkanı Ali Laricani, İran aleyhinde yaptırım kararı yayınlamanın sorunun çözüm yolu olmadığını kaydetti.

Cenevre'de İsviçre meclis başkanı ile görüşmesinde bu açıklamayı yapan Laricani, iki ülke ilişkilerini 'iyi' olarak nitelerken, İsviçre'nin bölge ve dünya meselelerine tarafsız yaklaşımının İsviçre ile ilişkilerin geliştirilmesinin önemini daha da arttırdığını söyledi.

İslami Şura Meclis başkanı Laricani, İran'ın nükleer faaliyetlerine temas ederken, Amerika'nın, Brezilya ve Türkiye'yi arabuluculuk konusunda yazdığı mektupla aldatmasına da işaretlerken, İran aleyhinde yaptırım kararı yayınlamanın sorunun çözüm yolu olmadığını kaydetti ve "Bazı güçler uluslar arası alanda istenmeyen girişimlerde bulunarak şom emellerini gerçekleştirmek istiyorlar; halbuki İran hiçbir zaman nükleer silah peşinde değildir" dedi.

Siyonist İsrail'in cinayetlerine de temas eden Laricani, bu rejimin baskı ve vahşilikle Filistinli halkını göçe zorladığını hatırlatarak, uluslar arası toplumun sessizliğinin kabul edilemez bir tutum olduğunu kaydetti.

Sözkonusu görüşmede İsviçre meclis başkanı da, sözkonusu görüşmeden ve aynı zamanda İsviçre'de düzenlenen uluslararası meclisler oturumuna İran'ın katılmasından duyduğu memnuniyeti dile getirerek, iki ülke arasında kültürel alanda işbirliğinin önemli olduğunu belirterek, İran'la her alanda ilişkilerin geliştirilmesinden yana olduklarını söyledi. (MNA)

- İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Yabancı Yatırımlar Şirketi Genel Müdürü Mehdi Razavi, ülkede İran ve Mısır bankası açılacağını ve bu bankanın bazı bankalar için 50 milyon dolarlık kredi hattı açtığını belirtti.

Razavi "söz konusu bankanın şu anda İran'da bir bürosu var. Bankanın üst düzey yetkilileri, bunu bir şubeye veya bankaya dönüştürmeyi amaçlıyor. İran Mısır-İran banka payı yüzde 40'tır geri kalan yüzde 60 da eşit şekilde Mısır sigorta şirketi ve ulusal yatırımcılar bankasına aittir. İran-Mısır bankasının kâr açısından yüzde 787'lik artışa şahit olmasının yanında küresel krize rağmen geçen yıl 2008 yılına nazaran yüzde 14 artış gösterdi" dedi.

İran-Mısır bankasının diğer bankalara 50 milyon dolarlık kredi açtığını vurgulayan Razavi, söz konusu bankanın faaliyetleriyle iki ülke arasında buzların erimesine neden olmasını umduğunu da belirtti. (IRNA)

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN

- The U.S. announced this week that it would upgrade its diplomatic relations with the PA by granting its mission in Washington - which is actually a PLO mission - the same status it enjoys in most European countries: that of a PLO "general delegation."

This is still a lower status than an embassy - a status the PA mission does have in many African and Asian countries, as well as some European and South American states. But it is a major step above what the PA has had until now.

Prior to this decision, the PA mission in Washington was at a very low level from the point of view of protocol: Its diplomats did not have diplomatic immunity, and it was not even allowed to fly the PLO flag at the entrance to its offices.

Now, its diplomats will enjoy diplomatic immunity and its offices will be able to display the PLO flag.

"This decision reflects our confidence that through direct negotiations, we can help achieve a two-state solution with an independent and viable Palestine living side by side

with Israel," said White House spokesman Thomas Vietor. "We should begin preparing for that outcome now, as we continue to work with the Palestinian people on behalf of a better future."

The PA has been seeking an upgrade in diplomatic relations ever since U.S. President Barack Obama took office last year. But after 18 months without progress, it was surprised to suddenly receive a letter from the State Department on Tuesday announcing that the U.S. had agreed. The letter was sent to Maen Areikat, who heads the PLO mission in Washington.

The Americans began seriously considering the upgrade two weeks ago as one of several steps it intends to take in an effort to entice Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas into direct talks with Israel. A week ago, American officials contacted both the Israeli embassy in Washington and the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem to see whether Israel would object to the upgrade, a senior Israeli official said. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded that he had no objections.

A senior Palestinian official confirmed the upgrade, and stressed that this is more than a symbolic step. "This move will enable PLO officials and Palestinian diplomats to operate in Washington in an official and orderly manner," he said.

The U.S. has also promised that if the PA does agree to direct talks, the construction freeze in the settlements will continue, and "not one house will be built," Abbas said this week.

Abbas made this claim three days ago, in an address to his Fatah movement's Revolutionary Council. But since the media were barred from that meeting, it became known only Thursday, when the PA published it on its official website, Wafa.

In his speech to the council, Abbas said he has not yet received sufficiently clear answers from the Americans about other issues that he wants settled before the talks begin, and is therefore not yet willing to agree to them. While Obama sent him a message that contained very positive statements on the subject of borders, he said, they were "not positive enough."

Abbas said he would submit a definite response to Washington's request for direct Israeli-Palestinian talks on July 28, but his basic position is that direct talks will be possible only if sufficient progress is first made on the issues of borders and security during the indirect talks now being conducted with American mediation.

PA officials said this week that the PA has asked Israel for answers on several specific points relating to these issues, and will not agree to direct talks unless the replies are satisfactory. But so far, they said, Israel has not responded.

The PA's insistence on a complete settlement freeze stems from the fear that its image will suffer severely if it agrees to direct talks without one. It also fears that Israel is not really serious about the talks, and would therefore rather wait until September, when the 10-month freeze on settlement construction expires, to see whether Israel extends it.

If so, the PA might view that as a sign of good faith on Netanyahu's part. White House spokesman Thomas Vietor said, "This decision reflects our confidence that through direct negotiations, we can help achieve a two-state solution with an independent and viable Palestine living side by side with Israel. We should begin preparing for that outcome now, as we continue to work with the Palestinian people on behalf of a better future."

Israel's defense establishment, meanwhile, has advised the government to allow the Palestinian Authority to import 50 Russian-made armored vehicles - something Israel has been refusing to do for five years now.

Russia first proposed giving the vehicles, which are armored only against light weapons, to the PA security services more than five years ago, in an effort to strengthen the rule of PA President Mahmoud Abbas. In March 2008, toward the end of Ehud Olmert's term as prime minister, Israel finally informed the Russians that it would approve the deal - but only if the number was halved to 25 and the vehicles were altered so that it would be impossible to mount a machine gun on them.

The PA agreed to these restrictions, saying it needed the vehicles to maintain law and order and deter Hamas. But in practice, the deal never went through, because Jerusalem got cold feet after the decision provoked a storm of criticism from the right wing, which

accused it of repeating the mistakes of the Oslo era - when weapons Israel gave the PA were later turned on Israeli soldiers and civilians.

In the meantime, the Russians sent 50 of the vehicles to Jordan, where PA security personnel were trained in their use as part of a wider American-led training program aimed at upgrading the PA's security capabilities. Recently, the PA again began asking that the vehicles be allowed in, raising the issue with both Israel and the United States.

Both the Israel Defense Forces' Central Command and the coordinator of government activities in the territories have recommended that the government accede to this request, in light of the impressive improvement in security cooperation between Israel and the PA. A security official told Haaretz that as long as the vehicles cannot mount machine guns, they pose no danger to Israeli forces.

But it seems likely that Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak will seek to link this gesture to the effort to persuade the PA to move from indirect to direct diplomatic negotiations. (Haaretz)

- Greece could help mediate peace agreements between Israel and its neighbors, its prime minister, George Papandreou, told Haaretz in an interview on Friday.

Asked if Greece would offer to mediate between Israel and Syria, he said "my father [a former prime minister] and I traditionally had close relations with many Arab leaders in the area. Yes, we could help. We won't impose ourselves but yes, we could help, it's in our interest and the interest of the Middle East."

Papandreou, 58, a former foreign and education minister, party leader and sociology expert, grew up in the thick of Greek political life. He took over as prime minister less than a year ago.

Papandreou landed in Ben-Gurion International Airport after a short stop in Cyprus, but dismissed the suggestion, raised by one of his hosts, that his visit was directly related to the Israeli-Turkish crisis.

"My visit was planned a long time ago. I've been thinking of forging closer ties with Israel for about two years. This is not my first visit to Israel. As chairman of Pasok [the Panhellenic Socialist Movement his father founded], I've had warm ties with the sister parties - Labor and Meretz - as well as the Palestinian sister parties - PLO and Barghouti's party," he said.

"Relations between the Greeks and the Jews go back many years." He did not go into detail, but Greek commentators say that in addition to the change in Greek public opinion regarding the history of Greek's Jews before and during the Holocaust, centrists and leftists are now encouraging Greece to expand its relations in the Middle East.

But Papandreou picks his words carefully. First, because he is called "the American," having been born to an American mother and having spent years abroad.

Second, because he is not interested in upsetting the fragile balance of power between Israel, Turkey and Greece; he is even less interested in spoiling the small improvement he achieved in his country's relations with Turkey over the past year.

Third, because the word "occupation" is a red rag to his voters, and as long as Israel does not withdraw from the occupied territories they won't hear of it as an ally.

On the eve of his trip to Cyprus, which marked 36 years of Turkish occupation, he told the Greek media "it is time to close the wound of the occupation." He also called on Turkey to demonstrate political goodwill for a just arrangement on the divided island.

As for the Israeli occupation, Papandreou says his position is clear. "We want to see the end of the occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state, a stable and viable state that would live in full cooperation and peace with Israel," he said. "Eventually it will be the best guarantee for Israel's security."

When an agreement is finally reached in Cyprus, it could serve as a model for the Israelis and Palestinians, he said.

Many Greek pundits do not believe Turkey is really willing or able to cut itself off from Europe and the United States and join the Muslim world. But they see the Israeli-Turkish

crisis as an excellent strategic opportunity for Greece to establish economic, cultural, diplomatic and military ties with Israel. Economic cooperation would include tourism.

Despite the agreements between Turkey and Greece and the goodwill Papandreou showed at his visit with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan immediately after Greece's October elections, Cyprus is only one point of friction between them.

Asked why he was visiting now, the first visit by a Greek prime minister in 30 years, Papandreou smiled and said "this is our neighborhood. I live in the area and I'm trying to be a good neighbor and help."

When asked about Syria, he said, "We depend on each other, all the countries depend on each other. If we don't work together and find a democratic, peaceful and just solution for our problems, our societies would be exposed to populism, xenophobia, polarization, violence, frustration and a rejection of democracy."

From the start of the crisis, Papandreou warned that Greece was on the edge of the abyss. On the other hand, he firmly resisted pressures by the European Union.

"Greek people feel they are not responsible for the crisis, but rather the politicians who misused the tax payers money," he said, explaining why he would not impose harsher decrees and cutbacks.

He admits there are difficulties, but lists a few successes as well. He sees every crisis as "an opportunity for the progressive people to save civilization from the lurking dangers." (Haaretz)

- An Israel Defense Forces soldier that had gone missing during an orienteering exercise Thursday had returned home later in the day, military sources said, after the IDF had already estimated that the soldier had probably disappeared of his own accord and that it was unlikely he had been kidnapped.

IDF sources added that Nadav Hyman, of the moshav Kokhav Michael near Ashkelon, had been investigated by army representatives at his home as to the reasons for his disappearance.

The IDF continued their huge search operation for the soldier after he failed to join the rest of his elite Sayeret Matkal commando unit following navigation training in a forested area near the Ella Valley in southern Israel.

Minutes before the start of the 20km march, the soldier ran off into the darkness and his comrades were unable to locate him, witnesses said.

Sayeret Matkal commanders immediately called a halt to the exercise and alerted other units with a request for help in the search operation, which made use of hundreds of troops and light aircraft.

Searchers deployed in two concentric circles: Regular troops scoured the ground for any sign of the absent soldier within 3km of the point where he was last seen, while specially trained scouts and police combed surrounding roads and trails.

Meanwhile, military investigators interviewed the soldier's friends and family in an effort to build a psychological profile of the soldier.

Investigators said it was unlikely that the man, a highly trained combat soldier from what is generally regarded as the IDF's top unit, had been kidnapped, as he was armed and the training area was not known as a target for militant operations.

They assumed he must be hiding in or near the training zone, or had been hurt and was awaiting rescue, investigators said, adding that to their knowledge the soldier was not carrying a radio or a tracking device.

Israel has feared new abductions since another soldier, Gilad Shalit, was captured by Hamas in a cross-border raid from Gaza four years ago. Shalit remains in captivity, while militants have vowed to seize more troops. (Haaretz)

- Three Spanish passengers of the the May 31 Gaza-bound flotilla will file a civil claim against Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, six government ministers, and the commander of the navy, Spanish newspaper El Pais reported Friday.

The lawsuit comes as Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gabriela Shalev urged the international community to stop a second flotilla of two Lebanese ships, which plans to set sail for Gaza on Friday or Saturday.

The claimants in the suit are two Spanish peace activists and a journalist. They will file suit against Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, Interior Minister Eli Yishai and Ministers Moshe Yaalon, Dan Meridor and Benny Begin, as well as Navy Commander Eliezer Marom.

According to the Republico newspaper, the three claim they were subjected to light torture, were arrested in an illegal manner, and were expelled by force from Israel by Israeli authorities after the events on-board the Mavi Marmara.

The 83-page suit claims that the Israeli government committed crimes against humanity.

'inciting confrontation'

Israel's UN Ambassador Gabriela Shalev urged Lebanon and the international community to prevent two Lebanese ships, Junia and Julia, from attempting to break the naval blockade of Gaza, warning that the vessels would be stopped.

"Israel reserves its right under international law to use all necessary means to prevent these ships from violating the...naval blockade," Shalev wrote in letters to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council which were obtained Thursday by the Associated Press.

Shalev accused organizers of the aid ships of "inciting confrontation and raising tensions in our region" and called on Lebanon's government "to demonstrate responsibility" and prevent the two ships from departing.

Israel and Lebanon remain "in a state of hostility" and "such action will prevent any escalation," the envoy said in the letters.

"Israel further calls upon the international community to exercise its influence in order to prevent these boats from departing and to discourage their nationals from taking part in such action," she said.

Shalev said it cannot be ruled out that the Junia and Julia are carrying weapons "or individuals with provocative and confrontational intentions" but highlighted "that all goods that are not weapons or material for war-like purposes are now entering the Gaza Strip through appropriate mechanisms that ensure their delivery as well as their civilian nature."

The ambassador explained that the organizers of the Junia and Julia are aware of these channels to deliver aid to Gaza but "similar to previous attempts by others" are seeking confrontation.

The Israel Navy went on high alert Thursday amid forecasts that the two Lebanese vessels were preparing to depart from Tripoli on either Friday or Saturday.

Defense officials said that the navy had deployed ships at sea to stop the ships and that commandos from the navy's Flotilla 13 – known as the Shayetet – were put on standby in case they would be needed to board the vessels to prevent them from sailing into the Gaza Strip. The organizer of the ships is Syrian national Yasser Kashlak. (The Jerusalem Post)

- IDF troops shot and killed a Palestinian attempting to infiltrate the Barkan settlement early on Thursday morning.

The Israeli force had laid an ambush near the settlement, located not far from Kalkilya, after a number of attempted infiltrations had been reported in recent weeks.

An initial investigation of the incident by the regional IDF commander concluded that the attempted infiltration was likely of a criminal and not terrorist nature.

During the night, the soldiers detected a number of Palestinians in the vicinity of Barkan. Suspecting one of them was armed, the soldiers called on them to stop, and when ignored, opened fire at their feet.

When the Palestinians did not stop, the soldiers then opened fire at their upper bodies, in line with IDF fire regulations. One Palestinian was killed and others fled the area.

Head of the Civil Administration Brig.-Gen Yoav Mordechai spoke on Thursday with the Palestinian commanders in the Kalkilya region and urged them to restrain their forces and the local Palestinian population in response to the incident.

Mordechai and the Palestinian commanders also agreed to establish a joint team to investigate the incident. Palestinian commanders toured the scene of the shooting shortly afterwards.

Over the past two years, the IDF has noted a sharp decline in Palestinian terrorism in the West Bank, particularly in attempted infiltration in settlements, due to a combined effort by the IDF and Palestinian forces to curb terror in the area.

Violence broke out along the Gaza border in a similar incident on Wednesday.

After weeks of relative quiet, clashes erupted as IDF soldiers opened fire at a terrorist cell approaching the border fence. Two Palestinians were killed and several were wounded.

The dead men were reportedly known Islamic Jihad operatives. (The Jerusalem Post)

- Maj.-Gen Giora Eiland said it was possible to prevent the May 31 flotilla to Gaza by political means, speaking in an interview with Reshet Bet Friday.

"Three months before the flotilla there were many courses of action which could have prevented it," said Eiland, head of a military commission charged with conducting an internal investigation of the Gaza-bound flotilla, which was boarded by Israeli commandos and left nine Turkish citizens dead.

Eiland suggested Israel "could have opened the Gaza crossings in advance, before the Turkish flotilla." The crossings were expanded to allow more aid to go through, but this was only done in the wake of international pressure after the flotilla.

The General also said Israel knew in advance about the changing political winds in Turkey and tightening ties with the IHH, the organization behind the flotilla. However, he thought this only strengthened Israel's resolve to continue with the predicted course of events, which led to the boarding of the Mavi Marmara, flagship of the flotilla.

The Eiland Commission's report concluded that a series of operational and intelligence mistakes led to the raid in late May aboard the Mavi Marmara.

The 100 page report listed a number of “mistakes” that had been made in the planning stage of the operation. Eiland, a former head of the IDF’s Planning Division and the National Security Council, said that he did not find any negligence in the planning and implementation of the operation. He also made it clear that there was a difference between “operational failures” and “operational mistakes” and that he had only found mistakes, not failures.

“There were mistakes, also on the high military levels, but happily, they were not the result of negligence,” Eiland said.

He slammed the navy for not preparing a "Plan B," instead choosing to board the flotilla despite heavy presence of activists on board.

The Israel Navy went on high alert Thursday in preparation for another flotilla, amid forecasts that two vessels from Lebanon were preparing to depart for the Gaza Strip in an effort to break the blockade by the end of the week.

Two ships are expected to depart Tripoli on either Friday or Saturday to try and break the blockade. One of the ships is carrying women and the other is carrying journalists. (The Jerusalem Post)

- Almost two months after the deadly Navy raid on a Gaza-bound flotilla, a civil claim will be filed on Friday in Spain against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, six of his cabinet ministers and Navy Commander Eliezer Marom, according to Spanish newspaper El Pais.

Two Spanish peace activists and a local journalist, representing a local movement supporting the Arab League, plan to file the lawsuit against Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, Interior Minister Eli Yishai and Ministers Moshe Yaalon, Dan Meridor and Benny Begin.

The May 31 raid left nine Turkish civilians killed and dozens of people injured, including Israel Defense Forces soldiers.

The two Spanish activists, who were onboard the Turkish-owned Marmara ship, say in the statement of claim that "the entire operation was well planned by the Israeli army in order to kill as many activists as possible, while they were only trying to help Gaza's residents."

The Foreign Ministry said in response that the lawsuit was "a continuation of the provocation in other means."

According to a statement issued Friday morning, "Israel's actions are legal and in accordance with international law. Just like the flotilla organizers did not have humanitarian aid in mind, but only used it as an excuse for provocation and violence, the people filing the lawsuit are not really interested in law and justice, but are using them as a tool against Israel. The appointed commission of inquiry must be given the chance to do its work uninterrupted."

Meanwhile, Israel is urging Lebanon and the international community to prevent two other ships from sailing to Gaza from a Lebanese port to break Israel's blockade of the Hamas-ruled Palestinian territory. The Jewish state warned that the vessels will be stopped.

Israel's UN Ambassador Gabriela Shalev on Thursday night accused organizers of the aid ships Junia and Julia of seeking "to incite a confrontation and raise tensions in our region."

'Demonstrate responsibility'

In letters to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council obtained Thursday by The Associated Press, Shalev said, "Israel reserves its right under international law to use all necessary means to prevent these ships from violating the ... naval blockade."

She called on Lebanon's government "to demonstrate responsibility" and prevent the two ships, Junia and Julia, from departing.

Israel and Lebanon remain "in a state of hostility," Shalev said, and "such action will prevent any escalation."

"Israel further calls upon the international community to exercise its influence in order to prevent these boats from departing and to discourage their nationals from taking part in such action," she said.

Shalev said it can't be ruled out that the Junia and Julia are carrying weapons "or individuals with provocative and confrontational intentions."

The killing of the eight Turks and one Turkish-American during the raid put Israel under growing pressure to open Gaza's borders.

Under the old blockade rules, only basic food and medicine were allowed into Gaza. In a first step after the flotilla raid, Israel decided to let in most consumer goods but said Gazans would continue to be banned from travel and exporting goods for the time being.

Egypt also decided to ease its closure of Gaza after the flotilla raid, opening its borders to restricted travel and limited humanitarian convoys. The move restored a link to the outside world for at least some of Gaza's 1.5 million Palestinians.

Shalev highlighted "that all goods that are not weapons or material for war-like purposes are now entering the Gaza Strip through appropriate mechanisms that ensure their delivery as well as their civilian nature."

She said the organizers of the Junia and Julia are aware of these channels to deliver aid to Gaza but "similar to previous attempts by others" are seeking confrontation.

In the latest challenge to the blockade, a Libyan aid ship blocked by Israeli missile ships from steaming to Gaza arrived in the Egyptian port of el-Arish on July 14. Its cargo was to be unloaded and handed over to the Red Crescent to deliver to Gaza. (The Jerusalem Post)

- Israel warned the United Nations early Friday that two ships preparing to sail from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip to bring aid to the blockaded territory would not be allowed to reach their destination.

"The stated intention of these vessels is to violate the existing naval blockade of Gaza," Israel's U.N. Ambassador Gabriela Shalev said in a letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Nigerian Ambassador Joy Ogwu, the current president of the Security Council.

Israel recently eased its blockade of the Gaza Strip in response to intense international criticism of a May 31 Israeli commando raid on a flotilla of aid ships. Nine pro-Palestinian Turkish protesters died in the confrontation.

Israel is allowing more food and other aid into Gaza via land crossings but continues to maintain the naval blockade.

Egypt also decided to ease its closure of Gaza after the flotilla raid, opening its borders to restricted travel and limited humanitarian convoys. The move restored a link to the outside world for at least some of Gaza's 1.5 million Palestinians.

Gaza has been controlled by the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas since 2007.

"Israel reserves its right under international law to use all necessary means to prevent these ships from violating the aforementioned naval blockade," Shalev said.

"Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that these vessels carry weapons or individuals with provocative and confrontational intentions," she added.

U.N. officials have urged countries not to attempt to break the Israeli naval blockade and urged all parties to show restraint.

U.N. under-secretary-general for political affairs Lynn Pascoe told the Security Council on Wednesday that "such convoys are not helpful to resolving the basic economic problems of Gaza and needlessly carry the potential for escalation."

Shalev noted that aid could be delivered to Gaza by land and said that those sending ships to the territory were doing so not to bring aid to the Palestinians but "to incite a confrontation and raise tension in our region."

In the latest challenge to the blockade, a Libyan aid ship blocked by Israeli missile ships from steaming to Gaza arrived in the Egyptian port of el-Arish on July 14. Its cargo was to be unloaded and handed over to the Red Crescent to deliver to Gaza. (Al Arabiya)

#### 4. EGYPT / MISIR

- UK-based oil giant British Petroleum (BP) has agreed to sell oil and gas fields in Egypt, the US, and Canada to Apache Corp for US\$7 billion in an attempt to raise cash following its record oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The Egyptian properties set to be sold are the Western Desert business concessions and an East Bard el-Din exploration concession, totalling US\$650 million.

A senior official at Egypt's Ministry of Petroleum told Al-Masry Al-Youm that BP will have to acquire clearance from the General Petroleum Corporation (EGPC) before proceeding with the deal, as stipulated by the corporation's agreements with its partners. The official added that the corporation will not object to the deal since Apache has been operating in Egypt for decades.

Assets in the Permian Basin properties in Texas and New Mexico will sell for US\$3.1 billion and assets in western Canada for US\$3.25 billion, according to Bloomberg News. Apache will pay a deposit of US\$5 billion in cash on 30 July.

Apache Corp's investments in Egypt have totalled US\$8 billion over the last 15 years, compared to BP's investment of US\$17 billion (40% of Egypt's local oil production). (Al Masry Al Youm)

- Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, 82, spoke in a televised speech on Thursday, appearing in good health in his first public address since rumors that the leader in power since 1981 was dying of cancer.

Speaking on the eve of the 58th anniversary of Egypt's "July revolution," days after a U.S. newspaper said he could have less than a year to live, the president had a busy week, meeting heads of states and attending military academy graduations.

"We celebrate today the anniversary of the revolution, remembering in admiration and respect those who led it," he said in a recorded broadcast, appearing healthy but thinner than usual. He vowed to press ahead with economic reform.

The Washington Times said on Sunday Mubarak was thought by Western intelligence agencies to be suffering from terminal cancer affecting his stomach and pancreas.

Rumors about Mubarak's health have rattled markets in the past because he has no designated successor. He has not picked a vice president, the post he held before taking office.

"Brother and sisters, economic growth and social justice are the goals we must aspire to today and tomorrow," he said. "We have made significant achievements on that front and we will achieve more."

Mubarak called on political parties to offer their "visions and solutions" as Egypt moves toward achieving those two goals.

Authorities have dismissed reports about a deterioration in Mubarak's health as categorically false and stressed that the president had returned to a regular schedule of meetings with visiting officials. On Sunday he met Palestinian and Israeli leaders and other officials.

Mubarak had gallbladder surgery at Germany's Heidelberg University Hospital in March, staying away from Egypt for nearly three weeks, his longest absence while in power.

Mubarak has not said whether he will run for a sixth six-year term in a presidential election in 2011. If he does not, his politician son Gamal, 46, is seen as a likely successor. Both Mubarak and his son deny any such plan.

The 1952 revolution was a bloodless coup led by military officers that brought an end to King Farouk's rule and marked the end of direct British influence. (Reuters),

## 5. LEBANON / LÜBNAN

- The Hezbollah leader has said that members of his group are expected to be charged by a UN court probing the murder of Rafiq al-Hariri, a former prime minister of Lebanon.

"I was personally informed by Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri before his visit to Washington (in May) that the [Hariri]tribunal will accuse some undisciplined members" of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah said in a press conference via video link in Beirut on Thursday.

"That's where things seem to be heading," he said, adding that the impending decision by the UN-backed court set up following the 2005 assassination of al-Hariri's had pushed Lebanon into a "very sensitive phase".

Nasrallah said Saad al-Hariri had assured him he would publicly avow that it was undisciplined members of Hezbollah, and not the party itself, who were implicated in the murder.

Mounting tension

His rare press conference came amid mounting tension over reports that the Hague-based Special Tribunal for Lebanon was set to implicate the powerful Shia party, which is backed by Syria and Iran.

"There is a dangerous project that is targeting the resistance," Nasrallah added, using the standard Lebanese term for Hezbollah.

"We are not at all afraid, nor are we worried. We know how to defend ourselves."

He said that, from the outset, he had doubted the impartiality of the tribunal, which he accused of having made the decision to indict Hezbollah before conducting its probe.

"All the data we have indicate that the charge sheet was written up before even the interrogation of our members," he said. "The indictment is ready ... it is only a matter of political timing."

Al-Hariri and 22 others were killed in a massive bombing on the Beirut seafront on February 14, 2005.

The assassination sparked an international outcry and led to the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon after a 29-year presence.

The Hariri murder has been widely blamed on Syria but Damascus has consistently denied involvement.

'Lack of credibility'

The UN tribunal's president, Antonio Cassese, said earlier this year he expects an indictment in the case between September and December, sparking fears in already tense Lebanon of a repeat of the violence that brought the country close to a new civil war in 2008.

Nasrallah reiterated on Thursday accusations that the tribunal lacked credibility.

"As long as the probe does not look into the possibility that Israel is implicated, we believe it is biased," he said.

"Never has the investigation considered the hypothesis that Israel had the means and the motive" to assassinate Hariri.

Nasrallah, whose party fought a devastating 2006 war with Israel, in March confirmed the team investigating the Hariri murder had interrogated members of his party.

But he said at the time that he did not believe Hezbollah was in the tribunal's line of fire.  
(Al Jazeera)

- Israel will simulate moving machinery and personnel into south Lebanon amid fears that Hizbullah will target main transport arteries in any future conflict, Israeli media reported Thursday.

The Jerusalem Post said that the test would be conducted in computerized simulations.

“The [Israeli Army] is working under the assumption that most of the ground battle will be fought in an urban setting, inside the 160 or so villages throughout southern Lebanon where Hizbullah is believed to have hidden most of its military infrastructure,” the paper wrote.

It added that “Hizbullah has heavily mined roads leading to southern Lebanese villages, aware that the ground offenses will include tanks and armored personnel carriers.”

Two weeks ago, the Israeli Army released military-intelligence images of southern Lebanese villages, including purported missile silos belonging to Hizbullah in Al-Khiam. The paper quoted an anonymous senior Israeli Army officer as saying that it expected Hizbullah to target transport lines in the event of another war.

“Hizbullah will likely allow the [Israeli] military force to reach its target point and then begin striking at the supply lines which the forces in the field will need to secure,” the officer said.

Talk of renewed aggression between Israel and Hizbullah – who last clashed in the devastating 2006 summer war which killed over 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilian, and 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers – has reignited recently following Israeli claims that the party had received long-range Scud missiles from Syria. Damascus has denied the allegations and Hizbullah continues to abstain from commenting on the size and makeup of its arsenal, which Israel estimates to comprise 40,000 rockets.

Earlier this week, Israeli Army Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi vowed to attack Lebanese urban centers in order to root out Hizbullah headquarters, which Israel believed to be extant in dozens of southern villages. (The Daily Star Lebanon)

## 6. SYRIA / SURİYE

- Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Fayssal Mikdad emphasized Thursday the necessity of the United Nations to assume responsibility towards the Israeli practices against the Syrian

citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan and against the Palestinian people to undermine their legitimate national rights.

Meeting Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process Robert Serry, Mikdad said the UN has to exert further efforts to unconditionally end the siege imposed on Gaza and allow humanitarian aid to enter it for rebuilding.

Mikdad also stressed that the current Israeli government's practices contradict the simplest requirements for achieving just and comprehensive peace in the region.

He said that this peace requires Israel's acceptance to withdraw from all Arab lands occupied since 1967, halt the settlement policy and land confiscation and Judaization of Jerusalem practiced in the occupied Arab territories.

Mikdad and Serry reviewed the latest developments in the Middle East, especially in the occupied Palestinian territories in light of the Israeli practices in Gaza Strip and its recent aggression against the Freedom Fleet and continuity of the policy of occupation, siege and settlement in the occupied Palestinian territories.

For his part, Serry spoke about tasks undertaken by the United Nations to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza and the rest of the Palestinian lands.

He also clarified the utmost importance accorded by the United Nations to achieve peace on all tracks to restore security and stability to this important region of the world. (Syrian Arab News Agency)

- Cumhurbaşkanı Yardımcı Asistanı Hasan Türkmani; tarih, kültür ve halklarının köklü bağlarla birbirine bağlandığı Suriye-Türkiye ilişkilerinin jeopolitik atmosfer için bir örnek oluşturduğunu söyleyerek bu ilişkilerin başka devletleri kapsamına alması için bir cazibe oluşturacağını dile getirdi.

Hama Esad Kültür ve Sanat Merkezinde dün sunduğu “Suriye-Türkiye İlişkileri ve Gelecek Ufukları” başlıklı seminerinde Türkmani; Suriye-Türkiye ilişkilerinin, iki tarafın halklarından ve çıkarlarından doğan, bölgesel politika görüşü ve stratejisi temelinde bir gelecek inşa edeceğine işaret etti. Ayrıca bu ilişkilerin bölgede güç dengelerinin yeniden

düzenlenmesinde ve sorunların çözümünde, denizler ötesinden gelen çözümlere, alternatif ve yeni bir bakış açısı oluşturacağını ifade etti.

İki ülke arasında Serbest Ticaret Anlaşmasının imzalanmasının iki tarafın ekonomilerine olumlu yansıdığını belirten Türkmani; 2009 yılında ilişkilerin üst düzeye ulaştığını, bunun iki taraf arasında Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik İşbirliği Konseyi kurma ve vize uygulamasının kaldırılmasıyla somutlandığını aktardı.

Baas Partisi Hama İli Genel Sekreteri Adnan el-Azu'nun katıldığı seminerin bitiminde Cumhurbaşkanı Yardımcı Asistanı Türkmani seminer katılımcılarından gelen politik, stratejik, ekonomik ve sosyal içerikli soruları yanıtladı. (SANA)

## **7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA / ARAP YARIMADASI VE BASRA KÖRFEZİ**

- At least five Yemeni soldiers have been killed in an ambush by suspected al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula fighters in the east of the country.

An army convoy was attacked on Thursday in Shabwa province, which along with Marib and al-Jawf has seen the majority al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula activity in the country, according to local officials.

"There was an ambush targeting the soldiers' vehicle... there is suspicion that al-Qaeda was behind the operation," a provincial official said.

Yemen's Mareb Press newspaper reported that the attackers stole equipment from the dead soldiers before fleeing.

Al-Qaeda fighters have carried out two other attacks against the government in recent weeks. (Al Jazeera)

- Gunmen killed at least five Yemeni soldiers on Thursday in a suspected al-Qaeda ambush of a military convoy in the south, the third assault on state targets in five weeks blamed on the group's resurgent regional arm.

Al-Qaeda in Yemen previously focused on high-impact strikes against Western and Saudi targets, but appears to now be targeting government forces in response to enhanced Yemen-U.S. security coordination and a government crackdown.

" It is basically reflecting their renewed strategy that they are going to fight the government, which has allied itself with the Saudis and the Americans "

Mustafa Alani, an analyst at the Gulf Research Center

"There was an ambush targeting the soldiers' vehicle and five were killed and a sixth was wounded. There is suspicion that al-Qaeda was behind the operation," an official in the southern province of Shabwa told Reuters.

Yemen, next door to top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, leapt to the forefront of Western security concerns after al Qaeda's Yemen-based regional wing claimed responsibility for a failed attempt to bomb a U.S.-bound plane in December.

Mustafa Alani, an analyst at the Gulf Research Center, expected attacks on both Western targets in Yemen and local security forces to continue.

"It is basically reflecting their renewed strategy that they are going to fight the government, which has allied itself with the Saudis and the Americans," he said.

Yemen's often poorly guarded security forces are easier to strike than many Western targets, and the group may hope to capitalise on anti-government sentiment in the south, home to a strong separatist movement.

Last month, gunmen raided the regional headquarters of the political security office in Aden, killing 11, an attack al-Qaeda said was revenge for a state assault on a militant stronghold.

Last week, more suspected al Qaeda gunmen attacked two security buildings, igniting clashes that killed four people.

## Northern Escalation

" It remains very tense after the failure of efforts to stop the fighting between the two sides "

A local official in the Harf Sufyan region

Violence also flared in north Yemen, where a machine gun and mortar battle pitted Shi'ite rebels against pro-government tribesmen and security forces, killing 19 people and threatening a truce to end an intermittent northern civil war.

The fighting was the bloodiest in the north since a truce was sealed in February to end the war, which has raged on and off since 2004 and displaced 350,000 people. Analysts say the truce may not last unless Sanaa better addresses grievances.

"There were very violent confrontations. Nine soldiers and pro-government tribesmen were killed as well as about 10 Houthis (rebels)," a local official in the Harf Sufyan region said.

"It remains very tense after the failure of efforts to stop the fighting between the two sides," he added.

Yemen's Western and Saudi allies want Sanaa, also trying to quell southern separatism, to resolve domestic conflicts like the war in the north so it can focus on fighting al-Qaeda.

But tensions between the rebels and tribes in the country's north have been rising in the Harf Sufyan area for months, and exploded after rebels attacked a tribal leader's home in early July, killing three of his followers.

The fresh violence brings the death toll in four days of fighting to 53, and comes after an offer from Qatar to revive a 2008 peace deal it brokered between the government and rebels. The move was welcomed by both sides.

Separately in south Yemen, the government released 163 separatist prisoners, the interior ministry said, as the impoverished Arabian peninsula state tries to relaunch a dialogue with opposition groups. (Al Arabiya)

A group of men raided the Political Security Organisation headquarters in Aden last month, killing 11 people. Al-Qaeda said that attack was revenge for a government assault.

And last week, gunmen attacked two government buildings in Abyan province. Police blamed that attack on the group.

## **8. SOUTH ASIA / GÜNEY ASYA**

### **PAKISTAN / PAKİSTAN**

- The United States on Thursday said Pakistan should investigate the Mumbai attacks and bring those responsible before the courts.

Briefing the media in Washington, State Department spokesman Phillip J Crowley said action against those responsible for the attacks was not only important to India but also to Pakistan.

“We have a policy... it is to fully cooperate with Pakistan on terrorism and to continue to work closely to help the country battle the insurgency,” said Crowley.

“We’ve seen significant progress by Pakistan over the past year. It is an area that was subject to the Strategic Dialogue that our governments just had in Islamabad,” he said.

“There are things, clearly, that Pakistan must do. And certainly, continuing to investigate and bring to justice those who are responsible for the Mumbai attacks is an important element,” he added. (Dawn)

- The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) commissioners of India and Pakistan, Aranga Nathan and Syed Jamaat Ali Shah, began their second round of talks here on Friday, DawnNews reported.

In today's meeting, the commissioners were discussing a formula for water-sharing, sources said.

During Thursday's talks, Pakistan and India agreed in principle to put in place a telemetry system on the Indus to record and transfer real-time data for the benefit of both countries.

The agreement was reached on the first day of their two-day meeting after the Indians "conceded to the utility" of the telemetry system in removing the confusion over water flow.

According to sources, both sides also agreed to jointly inspect the flood embankment of River Ravi.

India built a number of embankments on Ravi in the year 2001 and Pakistan has since been asking it for permission to inspect them.

Instead of agreeing to inspection, India alleged that Pakistan had also built such structures and sought to study them. (Dawn)

## **INDIA / HINDISTAN**

- India has a legitimate role to play in stabilising Afghanistan but peace can not be brought to the region without help from its nuclear-armed rival Pakistan, U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke said Thursday.

Successfully balancing the competing interests of the two countries, who have been jockeying for influence in Afghanistan for years, has been a challenge for the United States, but both are seen key to improving the region's security outlook.

India fears an Afghan plan endorsed by global powers this year to win over Taliban foot soldiers will give rival Pakistan, which holds sway over the militants, a greater say in the Afghan peace process and may ultimately lead to a Taliban takeover once Western forces leave Afghanistan.

But Holbrooke, U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, said Washington recognized India's "central role" in the region, adding it was wrong to see increased U.S. interaction with Pakistan as an indicator of a diminishing Indian role.

"There is an implication that there is zero-sum game here, that if we increase our interactions with Pakistan we are somehow diminishing India," he told reporters during a visit to Delhi.

"I can't even imagine why anyone would think that India is being diminished if we improve relations with Pakistan. That's in India's interests."

#### INDIAN ROLE ALSO KEY

Holbrooke's visit comes two days after Afghan President Hamid Karzai and several world leaders agreed that Afghan forces should be leading security operations by 2014. The United States plans to withdraw its troops from there starting next year

Six decades of India and Pakistan rivalry has turned Afghanistan, seen as key to their security and trade, into a proxy battleground, complicating efforts to stabilise it.

Many Indian analysts and officials believe Washington is biased towards helping Pakistan -- an ally in its anti-terrorism drive and a key partner in stabilising Afghanistan -- rather than India, which only recently moved closer to the United States.

Holbrooke indicated that it would be hard to ignore the influence Pakistan would have on any resolution of the Afghan war because of its influence over the Taliban leadership, but that it was not the only country involved.

"We have repeatedly acknowledged and stressed that India has an important role to play. Our goal is to have full transparency with India on what's going on in Afghanistan," he said.

India seeks to retain influence in Afghanistan to deter any anti-India militant training camps there -- which it accuses rival Pakistan of backing -- and to counter any broad militant Islamist surge threatening regional security.

Holbrooke's visit comes days after peace talks between India and Pakistan failed to make progress over Pakistani action against militants accused of planning the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

India blames Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) for the attacks, a group New Delhi says is backed by Islamabad. India also says Washington has not pushed Pakistan to crack down on LeT, a charge Holbrooke denied.

"When we talk about major terrorist groups we consider them as dangerous as the other groups," he said.

"It is a co-equal threat and we talk about it all the time with the Pakistani military," he said. (Asharq Alawsat)

## **AFGHANISTAN / AFGANĪSTAN**

- The Obama administration targeted key leaders of Afghanistan's Taliban with new financial sanctions Thursday in a move that could complicate relations with Pakistan and Afghan efforts to reconcile with insurgents.

The action by the Treasury Department will freeze the militants' assets, ban travel and trigger an arms embargo. It follows similar action by the United Nations earlier this week, and comes after calls from Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Afghanistan, and Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, for sanctions against Afghan insurgent commanders operating in Pakistan.

Taken together, the U.S. and U.N. sanctions prohibit any financial transactions of the terror leaders in U.N. member countries, putting additional pressure on Pakistan to take broader actions against the Taliban militants.

U.S. officials have been urging Pakistan to crack down on the al-Qaida-linked Haqqani network, saying Islamabad's reluctance to move into group's base in North Waziristan is hampering the Afghan war effort.

Pakistan has been moving cautiously, but has been slow at times to take on militants that Islamabad does not believe pose a direct threat. Pakistan has had historic relations with some of the Afghan insurgents and analysts suggest that Islamabad perceives them as useful allies in Afghanistan when international forces withdraw.

The Afghan government, meanwhile, has been pushing to try and talk with some insurgent factions, hoping to turn them away from violence. U.S. officials warn, however, that reconciliation is unlikely to succeed until the militants' momentum on the battlefield is reversed.

Three financial kingpins were targeted with sanctions, including a key member of the Haqqani network, which directs operations against U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan from safe havens in Pakistan.

Among those sanctioned Thursday was Nasiruddin Haqqani, an emissary for the Haqqani Network and brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani who leads the group with his father, Jalaluddin. Others sanctioned included Gul Agha Ishakzai, the head of the Taliban's financial commission and Amir Abdullah, the former treasurer to captured Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Barader.

The sanctions placed on the three leaders as terrorists would deprive them of the assets they need to fund their terror operations, said Adam J. Szubin, director of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

"We will continue to aggressively work to expose and dismantle the financial networks of terrorist groups in support of the president's goal of a stable Afghanistan," he said.

According to officials, Ishakzai is the head of the Taliban's financial commission, has collected money for suicide attacks in Kandahar, Afghanistan, and has been involved in the disbursement of funds for Taliban fighters. He has served as a main financial officer and close adviser to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar.

Abdullah has reportedly traveled to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya and the United Arab Emirates to raise money for the Taliban and facilitate meetings and communications with key leaders.

Nasiruddin Haqqani has collected funds for the Haqqani group, including from al-Qaida.

Last week, Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Afghanistan, urged officials to add commanders from the Haqqani network to the terrorist list.

At the time, administration officials said a review was under way, largely accelerated after the May 1 failed Times Square bombing.

The man who has pleaded guilty in the New York incident, Pakistani-born American Faisal Shahzad, said he trained with the Pakistani Taliban to build bombs, then returned to the U.S. to launch an attack that would avenge attacks on Muslims by U.S. forces overseas. (Asharq Alawsat)

- The US military's top officer said on Thursday that it was "reasonable" to expect Afghan forces to take charge of security from foreign troops by 2014, as promised by President Hamid Karzai.

Admiral Mike Mullen, speaking to reporters on his plane before landing in New Delhi, said he supported the Afghan president's efforts to present his country with a timetable for taking over from the NATO-led force.

"He as a leader has to send a message to his people that this is what we're shooting for," Mullen said.

"Right now that seems pretty reasonable to me and I'm ok with that," the admiral said, referring to the 2014 target.

Karzai first set 2014 as a goal for a security handover in his inauguration speech last year, and this week he won backing for his blueprint from dozens of countries at an international conference in Kabul.

The timeline for a security transition carries no binding legal authority, but the United States and its allies are pushing Kabul to build up Afghan security forces to pave the way for a withdrawal of NATO-led troops.

Karzai's road map also calls for curbing corruption and forging reconciliation with insurgents. But Mullen cautioned that talks with the Taliban could only be successful once coalition and Afghan forces shift the balance on the battlefield.

"I think we've got to be in a position of strength," he said. "We're just not there yet."

He said he remained optimistic about the prospects of gaining the upper hand against the insurgency in coming months, citing the US experience in Iraq, where he said American forces turned around the war in an 18-month period.

Although the Afghan campaign was in its ninth year, the US-led war effort had been neglected and only received sufficient troops and resources in the last two years, he said.

The Taliban, overthrown in a 2001 US-led invasion, control large swathes of the south and have put up stiff resistance amid a troop build-up of 150,000 US and NATO troops.

US President Barack Obama has set a deadline of July 2011 as the start of a gradual draw-down of US troops from Afghanistan, though the pace of the withdrawal has yet to be determined. (Asharq Alawsat)

*\*This media summary is prepared by ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan Doğan. 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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