



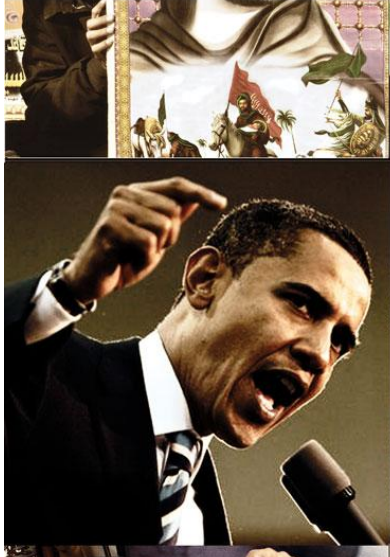
ORSAM
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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1. IRAQ / IRAK

- **Iraq official warns of regional war in defense of Syrian regime**

Former Iraqi National Security Advisor and Head of Al Wasat Party, Mouwafaq Al Rubaie, assured on Monday that a regional country is planning to spur a regional war in defense of the Syrian regime if foreign parties aim to topple the regime.

“Overthrowing the Syrian regime by force not through an organized and gradual approach risks to fail the security system in the region and might badly affect Iraq,” Rubaie told Alsumarianews. “Some regional parties will structure a regional war to protect Syria if the Syrian regime falls,” he stressed.

“We should stop calling to overthrow the Syrian regime by force but push Syria into democratic changes and help it attain them,” Rubaie added noting that “the strategic relation between Iran and Syria is clear and affirming that toppling the Syrian regime would weaken Iran’s regional stand.

“The Syrian regime must change to comply with the democratic wave and liberties in the region. It cannot remain the same as before the Arab Spring,” Rubaie said. “Syria is aware of its situation and must be given the chance to fix things without imposing external interference that would affect the entire region,” he concluded.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-70725-Iraq-official-warns-of-regional-war-in-defense-of-Syrian-regime.html>

- **Iraqi National Alliance Turkmen call for the establishment of two new provinces northern Iraq**

Turkmen in Iraqi National Alliance called, on Sunday, for the establishment of two new provinces northern Iraq while stressing the necessity to preserve the country’s unity.

“It is necessary to establish two new provinces in Tozkhormato and Talaafar districts which both meet required conditions for establishment of regions,” National Alliance member Fawzi Akram Tarzi told Alsumarianews. “Tozkhormato and Talaafar districts suffered from elimination and injustice during both past

and current regimes in addition to lack of very simple services in comparison with its density,” Tarzi assured.

“Establishing the two provinces should not oppose Iraq’s unity, independence and Constitution,” Tarzi added.

Talaafar District, which is situated northwestern Nineveh Province, counts 280 000 inhabitants and includes 3 major ethnicities (Arabs, Turkmen and Kurds). Talaafar has common borders with Turkey and Syria. Four regions are affiliated to Talaafar District namely Rabiha, Al Hamdyat known as Badoush, Zamar as well as Al Iyadiya.

Tozkhormato District, situated in Salahuddin Province, is located 180 Km northeastern Baghdad and includes a mixture of ethnicity and confessions.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-70652-Iraqi-National-Alliance-Turkmen-call-for-the-establishment-of-two-new-provinces-northern-Iraq.html>

- **SIIC names Hameed Mu’alla its official spokesperson**

Baghdad (NINA) – The Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (SIIC) decided to appoint

Sheikh Hameed Mu’alla its official spokesman.



A statement issued on Monday, Nov. 14, by the SIIC said that the SIIC’s Central Council has decided in its meeting on Nov. 13, 2011 to appoint Sheikh Hameed Rasheed Mu’alla, the SIIC its official spokesman with relation to various issues local and international arena are witnessing; asserting that all of SIIC statements are to be made either by the SIIC leader of its spokesman.

The SIIC called on the media, official and nonofficial bodies to abide by its statement.

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

- **Wardi: SLC set itself a ruler on the political blocs**

Baghdad (NINA) - MP from the Iraqiya Slate, Liqaa Wardi, accused the State of Law Coalition of setting itself a ruler on the political blocs.



She said, in a statement to NINA "the SLC controls the rest of the political blocs, as if it was an official or commander of these blocs and this is unacceptable.

Wardi noted "all blocs' demand of security ministries caused the failure of negotiations between the SLC and IS," explaining "the political agreements affirm the IS right in some security positions, but, this did not happen and was repudiated."

Maliki appointed Minister of Culture, Saadoun Al Dulaimi, as the Minister of Defense, a thing that IS objected to.

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

- **Independent organs became tools for governing party, MP Douri**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Ahrar political bloc MP Maha al-Douri said that some independent organs lost their independence and turned to controlled by the governing party, including Media and Communications Authority.

The media center of Sadr Office reported that Douri added "these cases are dangerous moves, which are controlled by the governing party, which matter should be discussed and prevented by the parliament in legal and constitutional ways".

She called for hosting these bodies in the new parliamentary session in order to disclose the facts, but some MP hindered such moves.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145640&l=1

- **Iraqi 2012 budget within days - Maliki says**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Premier Nouri al-Maliki announced today that the 2012

budget will be completed within coming days to be sent to the parliament for endorsement.

In a statement by his office, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, he added that the percentage of investment allocations shall be 30% of the budge.

Premier Maliki pointed out that countries like Germany, Korea and Japan will work on deferred payment.

http://en.aswatiraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145642&l=1

- **Bölge İle Katar Arasında Kültür Köprüsü Kurulacak**

Peyamner Katar/16/Nov/11(PNA)-Arap Emirliklerinde Şarika Kitap fuarı sırasında, Kürdistan Bölgesi Arap Emirlikleri Ticari işler temsilcisi ile Katar Kültür ve Basın Bakanı arasında yapılan görüşmede, Kürdistan bölgesi ile Katar arasında ki ilişkilerin geliştirilmesi ele alındı.

Düzenlenen Kitap fuarı Katar'da düzenlemiş en büyük fuar olarak değerlendirildi ve bu fuar sırasında Kürdistan Bölgesi Arap Emirlikleri Ticari işler temsilcisi Şilan Abdulsamed ile Katar

Kültür ve Basın Bakanı arasında yapılan görüşmede iki yönetim arsında ki ilişkiler ele alındı.

Yapılan görüşmeyle ilgili olarak Şilan Abdulsamed PNA'ya " fuar sırasında Sayın Bakan ile Eljazeera kanalı genel müdürüyle bir görüşmemiz oldu. Görüşmede iki yönetim arsında ki ilişkilerin her alanda gelişmesi konusunu ele aldık" dedi.



Abdulsamed, Bakan'ın iki halk arasında bir kültür köprüsü oluşturmak amacıyla Kürdistan Hükümetine resmi bir talepte bulunduğunu belirtti.

Katarlı Bakan, Kürdistan Bölgesi temsilcisinin bir bayan olmasından duyduğu memnuniyeti de özellikle ifade etti.

Ayrıca Bakan Kürdistan Bölgesi'nin çok farklı bir yer olduğunu ve sağladığı

gelişme, huzur ve güvenlik ile dikkat çektiğini belirtti.

<http://www.peyamner.com/details.aspx?l=6&id=256163>

- **Pres. Talabani, Iraq PM discuss political situation**

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani received on Wednesday Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki in his office in Baghdad.



During the meeting, they discussed the current political situation in the country, stressing on removing the obstacles hindering the development of Iraqi political process.

They reaffirmed the importance of solving outstanding issues and converging political views among Iraqi political factions in a bid to save the country from crisis.

http://www.pukmedia.com/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10481:pres-talabani-iraq-pm-discuss-political-situation-&catid=25:iraq&Itemid=386

- **Iraq need 360 days to build air defense**

Baghdad, Nov. 16 (AKnews) - After eight years of U.S. occupation and military development aid and only six weeks before U.S. forces leave the country, the Office of the Commander General of the Armed Forces claimed that Iraq needs another 360 days to develop its air defense.

The Office's spokesman Qassim Atta said during a conference Baghdad that the Iraqi government is working with the military on a plan to develop its air defense and supply it with improved military equipment.

Air defense seems to be one of the biggest challenges for the security situation in Iraq. In October, the Council of Representative's Committee for Security and Defense said it believes that al-Qaeda is returning to Anbar province due to a

lack of airborne and aerial forces in the area.

Vice Chairman Iskandar Wattout said, al-Qaeda's influence was able to grow after the U.S. withdrew 40 aircraft units from the borders to Saudi Arabia and Syria.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/272807/>

2. IRAN / İRAN

- **East-West split threatens nuclear consensus as Iranian issues keep on stifling powers**

The U.S. and its Western allies face an unpalatable choice over Iran at a key U.N. atomic agency meeting Thursday.

They can defy Russia and China with a demand that the Islamic Republic start answering questions on its alleged secret nuclear arms program or face renewed referral to the U.N. Security Council. Or they can settle for a milder rebuke of Tehran that leaves the big powers formally speaking with one voice but leaves the world's hands tied in investigating the suspicions about Iran.

Both ways, the U.S., Britain, France and Germany stand to lose as they head into the opening session of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board meeting.



If they push for a tough resolution that sets a time frame for Iran to cooperate with the IAEA's probe, then Russia and China are likely to vote against it. That may doom further attempts to speak with one Security Council voice at any future negotiations with Iran over its nuclear defiance - and increase Sino-Russian resistance against new U.N. Security Council sanctions on Tehran.

Going too far the other way keeps the facade of unity, by allowing Moscow and Beijing to endorse a weakly worded resolution with no deadline for Iran's cooperation and no warnings of penalties if it doesn't. But it once again stalls attempts to probe the allegations and

signals Iran that it can thumb its nose at the world community.

The big power split along East-West lines is not new - but is becoming more of a problem for Washington and its allies as Tehran advances in enriching uranium, which can be used for making weapons as well as fueling reactors.

Tehran denies hiding a weapons program and insists its enrichment activities are meant only as an energy source. But as Iran gets closer to bomb-making ability, Israel may opt to strike militarily rather than take the chance that its arch foe will possess nuclear weapons.

Israeli government officials have increased warnings that such a strike is being contemplated, and the U.S. also has refused to take that option off the table.

Israeli officials have suggested they could accept crippling Iran sanctions as an alternative to force. But despite four rounds of economic sanctions, the United Nations is being held back from tougher measures by Russia and China, both of them veto-wielding Security Council members and bound to Iran by strategic

and economic interests. They've offered no sign of a change in posture since President Barack Obama's meetings Saturday with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Chinese President Hu Jintao.

The West had hoped that an unprecedented detailing of Iran' alleged secret weapons work contained in a restricted Nov. 8 IAEA report could sway Moscow and Beijing. For the first time, the agency said Iran was suspected of clandestine work that is "specific to nuclear weapons."

Both Moscow and Beijing pressured IAEA chief Yukiya Amano not to publish that information. After Amano ignored them, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was quoted as saying that the IAEA report "contains nothing new" and provides no further evidence that Tehran is developing nuclear weapons. He also repeated Russia's opposition to any new U.N. sanctions. Beijing has been less unequivocally opposed to tough measures but tends to follow Moscow's lead.

Such support has clearly strengthened Tehran. Iranian President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad says IAEA fears are “absurd” accusations fabricated by Washington. On Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi said his country was drawing up an in-depth technical response to show the IAEA report is wrong.

The lack of progress on Iran also has created domestic fallout for Obama, with Republican presidential hopefuls seizing on it as proof that the U.S. president is weak on foreign policy.

Western officials sounded a tough line ahead of the IAEA meeting.

U.S. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Washington is “looking for strong action” from the board, as part of “ways to increase the pressure on Iran, be they multilateral or unilateral.”

“The result that we’re looking for is one that demonstrates to Iran very clearly and unequivocally ... the international community’s resolve as well as its very serious concerns about Iran’s nuclear program.”

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said that the board “must adopt a very firm

resolution demanding Iran to finally, in the briefest time possible, make known its activities, past and present, regarding a military program, allowing IAEA inspectors to work without restriction.”

Diplomats speaking on background in Vienna, however, depict a Western stance that is less clear.

One senior Western diplomat suggested the West was ready to risk further strains with Russia and China, telling The Associated Press that a strong resolution with priorities outlined by Juppe was preferable to a weak text that Russia and China can live with.

Others, however, emphasized maintaining six-power unity - even at the risk of watering down any text.

With agreement not in sight late Wednesday, Western officials floated another option.

They said the U.S. France and Britain - the three Western permanent Security Council members - might opt to skip any push for IAEA board action and turn

directly to the Security Council for action on the Iran report.

Russia and China would likely veto new sanctions. But the issue would be at least in front of the council, negating any need for IAEA referral to that body.

The diplomats and officials spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the talks.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/17/177649.html>

- **Blast hits Iranian pilgrim bus, two dead --sources**

BAGHDAD, (Reuters) - A roadside bomb blew up near a bus carrying Iranian pilgrims in northern Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least two people and wounding 18 others, security and hospital sources said.

The bus was attacked as the pilgrims returned from a visit to a Shi'ite Muslim shrine in the city of Samarra, 100 km (60 miles) north of the Iraqi capital.

Iraqi security forces are trying to quell a stubborn Sunni Muslim insurgency more

than eight years after the U.S.-led invasion that ousted Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein.

Military leaders have expressed concern that militants will step up attacks as U.S. forces withdraw. The remaining 24,000 U.S. troops are due to leave before year-end under a 2008 security pact between the two countries.

Insurgents have frequently targeted Iranian pilgrims, who have flocked to Shi'ite holy sites in Iraq since the 2003 invasion.

On Sunday, a roadside bomb blew up near a bus in the northwestern Baghdad district of Kadhimiya, killing one Iranian pilgrim and wounding four others, according to a police source.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27335>

- **Speaker: World Powers Seeking Chaos in Syria**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said on Wednesday that the world powers are striving hard to block negotiations and a peaceful

settlement of problems in Syria in a bid to intensify tensions to bring the Muslim country into chaos.



"World powers do not like the reforms process in Syria to yield fruit and they try through various methods to impair the trend of crisis settlement through talks and dialogue in Syria," Larijani said in a phone talk with his Kuwaiti counterpart Jassem Al-Kharafi today.

During the phone conversation over the latest developments in the region, specially the situation on the ground in Syria, the two sides underlined the necessity of support for the reforms process in Syria and continued efforts to resolve the problems in Muslim Arab country through talks and dialogue.

"The regional countries should take all opportunities through collective cooperation to solve the problems in Syria

and push ahead the reforms in this country," Larijani added.

He further blasted the measures taken by certain world and regional actors to intensify the crisis in Syria in a bid to deteriorate the conditions and developments in that country, and added, "These measures will not help to the establishment of security and tranquility in the region."

Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Kharafi said, for his part, that his country stresses reinvigoration and consolidation of peace in the region and settlement of the Syrian crisis through good-will efforts.

"Intensifying the crisis in the region will serve the Zionist regime and these problems are in the interest of this regime," he added.

"The Kuwaiti government will make its utmost efforts to resolve the problems in Syria through dialogue and talks," the Kuwaiti national assembly speaker reiterated.

At the end of their talks, Larijani and Al-Kharafi agreed on continued efforts to resolve the Syrian crisis and restore sustainable security and stability to the region.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9007273643>

- **Iranian FM: Amano's Report on Iran Impairs Agency's Credibility**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi lashed out at International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Yukiya Amano for his biased report on Iran's peaceful nuclear program, and said the report impaired the UN watchdog's credibility.

Speaking in an interview with German weekly Der Spiegel, Salehi dismissed the accusations that Iran is building a nuclear bomb as Western propaganda, and accused Tehran's enemies of waging a secret war against it.

The complete text of the interview is as follows:

SPIEGEL: Anyone reading the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

report can't help but wonder how long it will be until Iran completes its first nuclear bomb.



Salehi: Our Revolution Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa, a ruling according to religious law, describing nuclear weapons as un-Islamic. They are "haram," forbidden, which means these weapons of mass destruction play no role in our defense strategy. That's the truth, and anything else is propaganda.

SPIEGEL: Evidence indicating a secret nuclear program is overwhelming. The IAEA report includes a 12-page appendix laying out substantial evidence that makes it impossible to draw any other conclusion: Iran wants the bomb.

Salehi: That allegation is unfair and unjustified. The report seems to be interpreting many things, which is dangerous. The IAEA risks its credibility by making such interpretations.

SPIEGEL: IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano stresses in the report his "serious concerns regarding possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program."

Salehi: The IAEA is acting under pressure from certain countries ...

SPIEGEL: ... You mean Israel and its ally, the United States ...

Salehi: ... so we are prepared for everything. But we have no fear of the discussion at the IAEA concerning this document. Mr. Amano is facing difficult times. We will hold him and the IAEA accountable for their conclusions.

SPIEGEL: The report says its information is drawn from multiple, independent sources, including evidence provided by more than 10 member states, as well as the IAEA's own information.

Salehi: These so-called facts are nothing new. Amano's predecessor, Mohamed ElBaradei, knew the basic facts as well. We previously responded in a 117-page statement, but ElBaradei didn't draw the

same conclusions as Amano now. The IAEA has let go of its former objectivity.

SPIEGEL: The international community has good reason to mistrust Iran, considering how often your government has provided false information concerning its nuclear program.

Salehi: We have never provided false information. We have always cooperated with the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the IAEA treaty. But if more is demanded of us than the international treaties stipulate, then we refuse.

SPIEGEL: Your criticism notwithstanding, this report threatens to bring about another round of sanctions. Do you really expect the people of your country to put up with an intensified economic boycott?

Salehi: These are inconveniences we're willing to accept. With 3,000 years of history behind us, 30 or even 50 years spent under an embargo are a mere footnote. We won't give up our independence and we will continue our civilian nuclear program. There is great

unanimity on this point both within our government and among the people.

SPIEGEL: Instead of criticizing the nuclear weapons inspectors' report, you might do better to offer your suggestions on how to solve this conflict.

Salehi: Several countries, including Iran, have proposed approaches that could have led to a satisfactory solution. There was, for example, Turkey and Brazil's initiative for the removal of enriched material, which was initially well received by US President Barack Obama, but then never came to pass. A suggestion from Russia was likewise ignored. We also discontinued uranium enrichment as a trust-building measure, but were never thanked for doing so. Do you honestly believe further suggestions will yield results? I believe there's no longer any point in making additional concessions. The nuclear question is simply a pretense for weakening us by any means possible.

SPIEGEL: And you want to use any means possible to gain time in which to continue enriching uranium, bringing yourselves a step closer to building a bomb.

Salehi: As a nuclear scientist, I can't conceive what uranium enrichment for civilian purposes is meant to have to do with building a bomb. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty expressly allows us to enrich uranium. We even implemented (voluntarily) the treaty's Additional Protocol to satisfy skeptics.

SPIEGEL: You can't dispel the suspicions that you're abusing your right to enrich uranium.

Salehi: It's good we're talking about abuse. What is it that gives some nations the right to use computer viruses against us and murder our nuclear scientists, while still claiming to work for human rights?

SPIEGEL: Israel's government fears nothing more than a nuclear bomb in your government's hands, and appears to be preparing an attack on your nuclear facilities.

Salehi: We don't anticipate an attack. Israel knows how delicate the situation is. As proof that our nuclear program is peaceful in nature, we have established the conditions necessary for the required IAEA monitoring. I'd also like to point out

here that no other country has worked as intensively with the IAEA in this area as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

SPIEGEL: So you claim.

Salehi: During the most recent visit from Herman Nackaerts, the IAEA's head of nuclear inspections, we cooperated with the inspectors beyond the scope of our obligations. Mr. Nackaerts and his boss, Mr. Amano, even thanked us for our cooperation.

SPIEGEL: The United States and Europe are determined to keep Iran from carrying out further uranium enrichment. You'll have to come around eventually.

Salehi: No, we won't have to, and I'd like to point you to our history as proof. From its creation to the present day, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never given in to those who wanted to force it to do something. But those who met the country with logic and fair-mindedness instead of a double standard have always been able to count on Iran's cooperation.

SPIEGEL: On the contrary, your unwillingness to cooperate suggests

you're very much looking for the situation to escalate. There are certainly radical elements in Iran for whom an attack on their own country would be a convenient development.

Salehi: Those beating the drums of war are the same people who want to slow our progress. Iraq under Saddam Hussein forced us into an eight-year war. We don't want another war. Every politician in our country shares this opinion. But if we are attacked, we do know how to defend ourselves. Every attack, of any kind, will meet with retaliation. Immediately, without a second's hesitation.

SPIEGEL: You have also had to face accusations of state-sponsored terrorism. Just a few weeks ago, the US accused your Quds Force, an elite unit of the Revolution Guards, of planning an assassination attempt on Saudi Arabia's ambassador in Washington, Adel al-Jubeir.

Salehi: Not a single document supports that claim. The entire thing was staged by Washington. It's a farce with an unemployed loser as the supposed hit man, and it provides the US with a diversionary tactic to distract from the

financial crisis. The US government is presumably also hoping to destroy relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia, two brother nations in Islam. Don't forget, the US also justified its war against Iraq with falsified evidence.

SPIEGEL: After the plot was uncovered in mid-October, you promised to investigate the accusations. Where are the results?

Salehi: So far, our investigations have shown only that all of it must be a completely invented story. The main suspect in the affair has denied all accusations in court in the US. Why would we commit such a pointless act? In fact, we insist that the US apologize.

SPIEGEL: Accusations of state-sponsored terrorism in Iran are nothing new. Your intelligence services have been involved in assassinations outside your country several times.

Salehi: The Islamic Republic of Iran itself has been the victim of terrorism in the past three decades and has suffered many losses in combating it. We recently held a conference in Tehran on combating

terrorism. All of these are illogical accusations.

SPIEGEL: Obama and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have repeatedly confirmed the accusations concerning the planned assassination. Are you claiming both of them have been deceived by their own intelligence agents?

Salehi: All of these measures are part of an American strategy of tacit warfare against Iran. They want to present us to the world as evildoers, while distracting people in the West from their own terrorist activities, such as murdering our scientists and waging cyberwar. We have submitted a complaint with the United Nations over these unjustified accusations.

SPIEGEL: The US president has written a letter asking Iranian leaders to extradite Gholam Shakuri, a Quds Force officer in Tehran and the individual allegedly behind the attempt, to the US, along with another suspect living in Iran.

Salehi: We have not received sufficient evidence from the US giving us precise information about the true identity of this

alleged suspect. Why is he supposed to be in Iran? And where is he supposed to be there? There are thousands of people in Iran named Shakuri. Besides, there is no extradition agreement between Iran and the US. Such treaties exist only between nations that are friends.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9007273637>

- **Ahmedinejad ve Medvedev, Katar zirvesine katılmadı**

FHA- Petrol Bakanı Rüstem Kasımı, Cumhurbaşkanı Ahmedinejad'ın Katar'da düzenlenen doğalgaz ihraç eden ülkelerin liderler zirvesine katılmadığını açıkladı.

FHA- Birinci doğalgaz ihraç eden ülkelerin liderler zirvesi dün Katar'ın başkenti Doha'da çalışmalarına başladı.



Bugün sona eren zirveye İran Cumhurbaşkanı Ahmedinejad katılmazken, İran heyetinin Batılı ülkelerin enerji

alanında uyguladığı ağır vergileri eleştirdiği belirtildi.

Zirveye Ahmedinejad'ın yanı sıra Rusya devlet başkanı Medvedev'in de katılmadığı kaydedildi.

Oturuma katılan İran Petrol Bakanı Kasımı, oturumu doğalgaz sektöründe bir dönüm noktası niteledi.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007273565>

- **Tehran criticizes anti-Iran draft resolution on U.S. plot claim**

TEHRAN, Nov. 16 (MNA) – The Iranian ambassador to the United Nations has roundly criticized the anti-Iran draft resolution that condemns Tehran's alleged plot to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington, Adel al-Jubeir.

Ambassador Mohammad Khazaii made the remarks in a letter that he sent on Wednesday to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and the heads of the UN delegations based in New York.

Saudi Arabia's UN delegation circulated the U.S.-backed draft resolution to the General Assembly on Wednesday.

Abdulmohsen Alyas, the Saudi UN mission's spokesman, said on Tuesday that the draft resolution will be put to a vote on Friday, according to Reuters.

Reuters also reported on Tuesday that the draft resolution says it "deplores the plot to assassinate the ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States of America."

It also condemns "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations" and "strongly condemns acts of violence against diplomatic and consular missions and representatives."

In his letter, Ambassador Khazaii dismissed the allegations leveled against Iran and warned of the repercussions of the decision to submit the draft resolution to the assembly.

He also wrote that the move set a dangerous precedent, is unacceptable, and ruins the reputation of the UN.

He added that the draft resolution, which is backed by the U.S. and is based on unfounded allegations, is merely meant to advance the short-sighted policies of Washington.

The mechanism of the assembly used not to allow the submission and review of draft resolutions drawn up based on false allegations, Khazaii said.

Those who presented the draft resolution have flouted UN regulations, he said, adding that the move will definitely undermine the role and credibility of the assembly.

The Iranian ambassador also described the move as a threat to regional and international security.

Khazaii also wrote about the Iranian mission's letter to UN authorities dated October 11, 2011, in which he emphasized that Iran is opposed to terrorism in all its forms and called for the letter to be registered as a UN official document.

Elsewhere in the letter, he stated that the Islamic Republic fully abides by its commitments to the terms of the

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Internationally Protected Persons, including Diplomatic Agents, which was adopted in New York on December 14, 1973, and called on the countries which prepared the draft resolution against Tehran to comply with the convention.

The propaganda campaign that the U.S. has launched against Iran and the accusations that it has made against Tehran show Washington's evil and hostile intentions, he said.

However, based on the authentic documents that Iran has presented to the UN, the U.S. has backed many terrorist actions against the Iranian government and people, Khazaii wrote.

Iran ready to sign draft resolution if changes are made to it

Iranian Foreign Minister on Wednesday criticized the move by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia and said that Tehran did not expect Riyadh to take such a move.

Speaking to ISNA, Salehi stated, "We are the supporters of the campaign against

terrorism and are in the forefront (of the campaign), and we held an international conference on the issue in Tehran a few months ago. Therefore, we agree with most of the content of the draft resolution and could be a signatory to the resolution. However, in one or two paragraphs, the issue of the U.S. recent scenario, has been mentioned, which, if dropped or revised, the draft could be agreed upon by the majority of UN member states."

"Given the efforts that the Islamic Republic of Iran has made to create an atmosphere of friendship, peace, and stability in the region and to create a proper atmosphere (in the relations) between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi Arabia, it was not expected that Saudi Arabia and the U.S. put forward such a proposal. And the alignment of Saudi Arabia and the U.S. is not good in the view of the Islamic ummah," he added.

Salehi also said, "Saudi politicians are experienced, and, given our efforts to bring the two countries closer together, we hope that the Saudis would carefully consider their very political action so that the situation would not be complicated

further. And we do not wish that relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia would become more complicated.”

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1461684>

- **Salehi says Iran in talks with Russia to settle nuclear issue**

TEHRAN, Nov. 16 (MNA) – Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi says the Islamic Republic is holding negotiations with Russia to find a solution to the dispute between Tehran and the West over Iran’s nuclear program.

“We are in constant contact with Russian officials... and believe that their step-by-step proposal, which was a gesture of good faith,” was welcomed by Iranian officials, Salehi told reporters on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday.

According to the Russian proposal, declared on July 13, Iran could address questions about its nuclear program and be rewarded with a gradual easing of sanctions.

“But our views should also be mentioned in the plan,” Salehi said. “We have also made a proposal and held meetings with the Russians over its details, and they accepted it.”

He went on to say that in fact, Iran is holding dialogue to find a solution to the issue and get away from new sanctions which probably would be imposed on the country in the wake of false allegations about its nuclear program.

He also said, “The latest developments in the region, including the issue of Syria, are also being discussed in our meetings with the Russians.”

We are in talks with the IAEA

In reply to a question about Tehran’s relation with the International Atomic Energy Agency after it released a report on Iran’s nuclear program, Salehi said what IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano did was an “ill-advised” and “unfair” move which was made under the West’s political pressure.

The move will discredit the IAEA, he added.

“However, we will be in contact with the agency and will not allow the situation get worse, since we believe that the agency is an international organization, and we do not want the agency to be discredited,” Salehi explained.

Salehi also said that Iran plans to send a letter in response to the recent report of the IAEA to the relevant international institutions.

Iran will not make any hasty decision

The foreign minister said, “The West is seeking to make our country act hastily. For instance, they intend to make us say that we are not bound to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) any longer, but they are totally mistaken because we are experienced enough not to act passively.”

He also said that up until now, Iran's peaceful nuclear activities have gone well despite great political pressure exerted against the country.

“Have we retreated from our stance? Has any disruption been created in our

peaceful nuclear activities despite the political pressure?”

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1461736>

- **Kışladaki patlama ile Amerika ve İsrail Rejimi'nin bağlantısı yoktur**

Tahran, 16 Kasım 2011 – İran Genel Kurmay Başkanı, İsrail ve Amerika ile hiçbir bağlantısı olmadığına temas eden İran Genel Kurmay Başkanı, olay ile ilgili araştırma sonucunun istikbarın ve kasap rejimin ağzına kuvvetli bir yumruk olacağını söyledi.

MHA- İran Genel Kurmay Başkanı Tümgeneral Seyyid Hasan Firuzabadi, bugün yapılan basın toplantısında, Tahran civarındaki bir askeri kışlada meydana gelen patlamalarla ilgili olarak açıklamalarda bulundu.

İran Genel Kurmay Başkanı Tümgeneral Firuzabadi, patlamalar sırasında şehit olan Devrim Muhafızı komutanlarından Hasan Tehrani Mukaddem'in bütün ahlaki kriterleri kendisinde toplamış, Besic ruhlu gerçek bir İnkılap askeri ve lideri olduğunu söyledi.

Tümgeneral Firuzabadi, konuşması sırasında Amerika ve Siyonist Rejim'in tehditlerine de işaret ederek, hali hazırda İsrail Rejimi'nin çok hassas ve çok zor şartlarda olduğunu, İslami uyanışın ve İslamı nizam kudretinden İsrail Rejimi'nden "yetersizlik" feryatları yükseldiğini, aynı şekilde Wall Street'teki sermaye düzeni karşıtı hareketlerle boğuştuğunu, bu yüzden bütün bu tehditlerin aslında "yetersizlik" feryatları ve çığlıkları olduğunu söyledi.

Üç gün önce meydana gelen ve 17 askerin şehit olduğu kışladaki son patlama hadisesinin, İsrail ve Amerika ile hiçbir bağlantısı olmadığına temas eden İran Genel Kurmay Başkanı, olayın Devrim muhafızlarının araştırmasını iki hafta aksattığını araştırma sonucunun istikbarın ve kasap rejimin ağzına kuvvetli bir yumruk olacağını söyledi.

Fakat silah arkadaşlarının Şehit Komutan Mukaddem'in yolunda daha güçlü olarak ilerleyeceklerini vurgulayan Tümgeneral Firuzabadi, İran halkının 30 yıldan beri süregelen ve her gün bir önceki güne oranla daha fazla artan düşman tehditlerinin temelsiz ve asılsız olduğunu anladığını belirtti.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1461544>

- **Japonya: Tahran-Tokyo ilişkilerine önem veriyoruz**

Tahran, 16 Kasım 2011 – Japonya Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü, bağları derin olan İran ve Japonya arasındaki ilişkilerin geliştirilmesini ümit etti.

Mehr haber ajansı muhabirine Tokyo'da demeç veren Yatuka Yukui, İran ve Japonya arasındaki ilişkilerin derin olduğunu söyleyerek bu ilişkilerin geliştirilmesini ümit etti.

İran ve Japonya arasındaki 2000 yıllık ilişkilerine işaret eden Japonya Dışişleri Bakanlığı Sözcüsü, tsunami felaketinden sonra İran halkının yardımları ve desteklerini unutamayacaklarını söyledi.

Yatuka Yukui, iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin köklü olduğunu dile getirerek Japonya halkı İran halkına karşı dostane duygular taşıdığını belirtti.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1461483>

- **Salihi: Tahran ve Riyad ilişkileri kötüye gitmemeli**

İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanı Ali Ekber Salihi, Tahran-Riyad'ın yaklaşması için yapılan çabalara bakıldığında Suudi Arabistan'ın iki ülke ilişkilerinin kötüye gitmemesi için son siyasi girişime özen göstermesi gerektiğini belirtti.



Basın mensuplarına konuşan Salihi, Suudi Arabistan'ın böyle bir girişimde bulunmasının beklenmediğine işaret ederek "İslam ümmeti nezdinde bir İslam ülkesinin başka bir İslam ülkesine karşı girişimde bulunması uygun bir hareket değil" dedi.

Böyle gelişmelerin gerçekleşmesini istemediklerini vurgulayan Salihi "tüm çabamız, yanlış anlaşmaların giderilmesi yönündedir eğer Suudi Arabistan ABD ile birlikte BM Genel Kuruluna sunmayı

düşündüğü ve içeriğinde İran'a karşı bentlerin de bulunduğu karar taslağını düzeltirse İran, bunu imzalayanlardan olacak" dedi.

İran'ın terörle mücadelede öncü ülke olduğuna işaret eden Salihi bir süre önce Tahran'da bu konuda bir konferansın yapıldığını hatırlattı.

Salihi, Tahran'ın bölgede dostluk, barış ve istikrar ortamının yaratılmasına ve ayrıca İran ve Suudi Arabistan arasında uygun atmosferin oluşmasına çabaladığına bakıldığında Suudi Arabistan'ın böyle bir girişimde bulunmasının beklenmediğinin altını çizdi.

<http://www2.irna.ir/tr/news/view/line-120/1111171117115041.htm>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN

- **European diplomat: Palestinians willing to freeze UN bid if Israel, U.S. resume funds**

Palestinians are prepared to suspend their efforts to achieve full membership in such agencies as the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization, a European diplomat says.

The Palestinian Authority has offered the United States a deal, saying it would freeze all moves to achieve full membership for "Palestine" in various UN agencies until the end of January, a European diplomat said, while the United States and Israel would resume transferring it funds.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's special envoy Isaac Molho met secretly in London on Tuesday with U.S. administration representatives David Hale and Dennis Ross to discuss the suggestion.
abbas - Reuters - November 17 2011



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According to a European diplomat whom the PA had updated about the proposal, the PA plans to complete the process of

trying to get full UN membership for Palestine recognized by the Security Council. PA President Mahmoud Abbas is expected to ask for a vote by the end of December, although the move is doomed to defeat. Even if the Palestinians muster enough votes, the United States will veto it.

Other than that, however, the Palestinians are prepared to suspend their efforts to achieve full membership in such agencies as the World Health Organization and the World Trade Organization, the diplomat said. Nor will they ask the General Assembly to upgrade their observer status to non-member observer state.

Though the Palestinians offered to temporarily suspend these UN efforts, if a deal is struck that restores the PA's cash flow, it is thought such moves will be stopped for the foreseeable future.

Israeli sources confirmed that Molho had met with the U.S. officials in London, while a British source said Molcho also met with a senior Arab figure.

While the Americans view the PA proposal positively, it isn't clear whether Israel will

agree to it. Israel is still refusing to transfer the approximately \$100 million in taxes it collected for the PA in October.

During an inner cabinet meeting on Monday, Netanyahu had planned to pass a decision to release the funds, but he backed down in the face of opposition from several ministers.

Meanwhile, the status of PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in a unity government of Hamas and Fatah remained unclear yesterday. Faisal Abu Shahla, a Fatah MP, said that Fayyad is Abbas' choice for prime minister of the transitional government until the general elections expected in May.

Shahla added, however, that a decision would be made at a Cairo meeting next week between Abbas and the head of Hamas' political bureau, Khaled Meshal.

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/european-diplomats-palestinians-willing-to-freeze-un-bid-if-israel-u-s-resume-funds-1.395996>

- **Barak, Lieberman to skip U.S. forum to avoid public debate on Iran, sources say**

Officials in Jerusalem say Netanyahu asked Defense Minister and Foreign Minister not to give speeches on the Iranian nuclear issue at the Saban Forum in order to keep a 'low profile.'

By Barak Ravid Tags: Avigdor Lieberman Benjamin Netanyahu Ehud Barak Iran nuclear

Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman decided to cancel their participation in a Washington conference on Israeli-U.S. ties in order to avoid a public debate on the Iranian nuclear issue, diplomatic sources in Jerusalem said Wednesday.

Barak and Lieberman were due to attend the Saban Forum, which takes place every December in Washington D.C. and includes senior U.S. government officials and Israeli Knesset members and senior officials. This year, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton are due to give speeches. On the Israeli side, Lieberman and Barak were due to speak.

Barak and Lieberman - Amit Shavi

Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

Photo by: Amit Shavi

According to sources in Jerusalem, the office of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu turned to Barak and Lieberman asked them not to give speeches on Iran, which is one of the main subjects of the conference, due to the current international sensitivity of the issue and Israel's desire to keep a "low profile" on the matter in order to avoid harming efforts to impose further sanctions on Iran.

According to other sources, Lieberman and Barak were asked to cancel their participation in the event in order to avoid a public debate on the Iranian issue with former Mossad chief Meir Dagan and former IDF chief Gabi Ashkenazi, who are publicly opposed to an Israeli attack on Iran.

Barak decided to cancel his participation following Netanyahu's request, sources said. Lieberman is also expected to cancel his participation in the conference and

make an announcement in the coming days.

Barak's office confirmed that he had canceled his participation in the Saban Forum, but claimed the reason was simply due to scheduling. Lieberman's office refused to comment.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/barak-lieberman-to-skip-u-s-forum-to-avoid-public-debate-on-iran-sources-say-1.395965>

- **Abbas calls on Palestinians to mount non-violent resistance against Israel**

Palestinian president says his people 'will not succumb to the occupation,' says will meet Hamas leader next week to discuss implementation of unity agreement.

By DPA Tags: Palestinians Mahmoud Abbas Middle East peace Hamas

President Mahmoud Abbas called Wednesday on the Palestinians to mount non-violent resistance to Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

"We will not succumb to the occupation and we will not give up on our rights," he

said at a ceremony in the city of Ramallah to commemorate Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who died seven years ago.

Abbas - Reuters - Nov 16, 2011

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, November 16, 2011.

Photo by: Reuters

"We know how to defend our rights in ways and methods, including popular resistance. I call for the widest participation possible in this resistance," Abbas said.

He added that the non-violent resistance was meant as a constant reminder to the world that Israel continues to occupy Palestinian land.

Abbas said he would meet Hamas leader Khaled Mishaal on November 23 to discuss implementation of an Egyptian-brokered unity agreement between his Fatah party and its rival Islamist movement, which controls the Gaza Strip.

"We should answer the question: Where are we going? Because the future is important for all of us," Abbas said.

He added that the Palestinian would not let go of their application for full membership in the United Nations, which he submitted in September.

"We will get full membership no matter how long it will take and regardless of the obstacles," he said. "We will ask the world for our right, which have been long forgotten."

Abbas reemphasized that the goal of joining the United Nations is not to isolate or de-legitimize Israel, but rather to "isolate and de-legitimize Israel's policies in the world."

He also said that the Palestinians look at the United States as a friend in spite of its pro-Israel policies.

Abbas reiterated that he would not hold peace negotiations with Israel unless it stopped settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Abbas has said he wants to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"Without these two conditions, there will be no negotiations," he said. "We do not want negotiations that go on forever and which go around in an empty circle."

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/abbas-calls-on-palestinians-to-mount-non-violent-resistance-against-israel-1.395958>

- **Iran training Palestinians to operate anti-tank missiles**

IDF believes select group of Gaza terrorists have undergone extensive military training in Islamic Republic; Strip completely different today than what it was three years ago, says defense official. Talkbacks (100)

A select group of Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip have undergone extensive military training recently in Iran, turning them into expert operators of sophisticated anti-tank missiles, The Jerusalem Post has learned.

The IDF believes that Hamas and Islamic Jihad have obtained several hundred advanced Russian-made antitank missiles – such as the Kornet and the Fagot – which have a range of more than 4

kilometers and are capable of penetrating armored personnel carriers and some IDF tanks.

Terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip had a small number of these missiles ahead of Operation Cast Lead – Israel’s offensive against Hamas in 2009 – but only used them in a handful of known instances.



“They were not trained well then, and as a result, the missiles were not effective,” a senior IDF officer explained this week. “Since then, the groups have significantly increased the stockpile and have also sent specific terrorists to Iran for extensive training where they became anti-tank missile experts.”

The level of expertise was demonstrated earlier this year when Hamas fired a Kornet anti-tank missile at a school bus near Nahal Oz, which killed 16-year-old Daniel Viflic.

The missile was fired from a distance of close to 3 kilometers and the operator had to fire in between the Gaza security fence and electrical cables. “He also had to hit the bus, which was not easily seen on the road,” the officer said, explaining the complexities of the attack as a demonstration of the level of expertise in Gaza.

The anti-tank missiles are obtained by Hamas in several different ways. In some cases, they are purchased directly from Russia by Syria and are then transferred to Hamas or Hezbollah.

In other cases, Hamas operatives buy the weaponry on the black market and then smuggle it into the Gaza Strip via the tunnels it maintains under the Philadelphi Corridor.

“The Gaza Strip is completely different today than what it was almost three years ago,” a senior defense official said. “The amounts of weaponry are significantly higher as well as the type of weaponry and its sophistication.”

In face of the threat, the IDF is moving forward with plans to install the Trophy active protection system on Merkava Mk 4 tanks that are in production ahead of their delivery to the 401st Armored Brigade. Two of the brigade’s battalions have already received the system and the remaining battalion will finish receiving it by the beginning of 2012.

The Trophy system creates a hemispheric protected zone around armored vehicles such as the Merkava tank, which operated prominently in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

Using advanced radar, the system is designed to detect and track a threat and counters it with a launched projectile that intercepts the anti-tank missile.

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=245874>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT / AFRİKA ve MISIR

- **Egypt Islamists plan mass rally against charter**

Egyptian Islamists will hold a mass rally on Friday to protest a government draft of a

basic constitution they say should be left to an elected parliament, a leading Islamist group announced on Wednesday.



The Muslim Brotherhood, the country's best organized movement, said on its website it would hold the rally after the government went ahead with its plan to draft overarching constitutional principles.

The principles, which would bind a panel appointed by parliament that Islamists hope to dominate, were demanded by liberal and secular groups. A three-stage parliamentary election will start on November 28.

The government's draft drew fire from most quarters for including clauses that removed the ruling military's budget from parliamentary oversight and allowed the military final say on military-related laws.

The government revised the draft, but the Islamists, who organized a mass protest in July against such a charter, have rejected the very idea of a document that would limit parliament's authority to draft the constitution.

"The cabinet is clinging on to undemocratic articles, so we have no choice but to stage a million person march to defend democracy on Friday," the Brotherhood said.

The Brotherhood, through its Freedom and Justice Party, may emerge as the largest bloc in the election, the first since an uprising ousted president Hosni Mubarak in February.

The military, which took charge after Mubarak's ouster and suspended the constitution and parliament, says it will hand over power once a president is elected.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/17/177599.html>

- **U.S. plays down fears over Libya weapons proliferation**

A top U.S. official on Wednesday sought to play down fears that the conflict that toppled Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi had allowed extremists to get their hands on weapons used there.

U.S. ambassador Daniel Benjamin, the U.S. State Department's coordinator for counter-terrorism, cautioned against alarmism in comments to an international security forum in Algiers.

Host country Algeria is one of several countries to have expressed concern about the proliferation of weapons from the conflict. Only last week, a local extremist group said it had acquired part of Qaddafi's arsenal.

"We have been one of the main beneficiaries of the revolutions in the Arab world," said Algerian national Mokhtar Belmokhtar, believed to be one of the leaders of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Benjamin responded cautiously to the claim.

"Where there is more money available to AQIM in the region and more fighters

coming back from other places, then obviously we need to be very very careful and work to ensure that that threat does not grow," he said.



"It is premature to say that it has risen, but I think it is very important to be very cautious and proceed together to ensure that this threat does not increase," he added.

Derrin Smith, the head of a U.S. taskforce looking into the issue of MANPADS (shoulder-launched missile launchers) said Monday there was no clear proof that extremists had acquired such weapons.

Delegates also discussed the possible links between AQIM and the Nigerian Islamists of Boko Haram, who have claimed responsibility for a string deadly attacks there.

An August suicide bomb attack claimed by the group on U.N. headquarters there killed 24 people.

European Union's coordinator for Sahel strategy, Manuel Lopez Blanco, who attended the conference said the two groups had the "same agenda" and "a probable cooperation in training materials... and movement of their respective elements," according to the APS news agency.

Around 150 security experts are gathered for the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF).

"We must be mindful that we will not always agree on every issue, but that those gathered here agree that there are urgent needs and challenges that aren't being addressed and that each country or organization here today has a unique expertise to contribute," Benjamin said at the opening session.

The gathering is mainly concerned with security issues in the region.

It will also look at international cooperation between the police and

courts in different countries, how to tackle funding for terrorism and border security, said Sabine Noelte, of Canada's foreign ministry.

The GCTF, which was only launched in September, is co-managed by the United States and Turkey.

The meeting gathers specialists from around 30 countries and international organizations for closed-door meetings over two days.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/16/177571.html>

- **Tunisian TV boss faces trial over showing film on Iran's 1979 revolution**

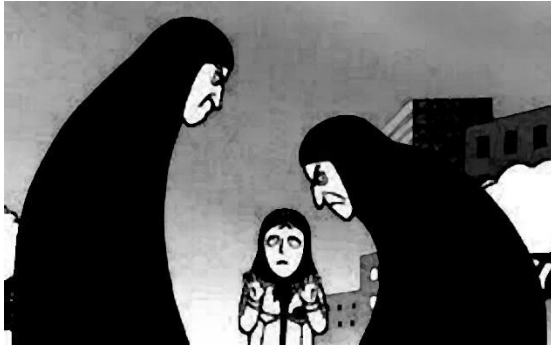
The head of a Tunisian television station whose broadcast of "Persepolis" sparked violent protests, said Wednesday he faced trial and up to three years in jail if convicted of offending Islamic values.

Nabil Karoui, the head of Nessma television, told AFP he was being prosecuted for having "violating sacred values, good morals and disturbing public

order” by broadcasting the film in October.

If convicted, he faced up to three years in prison, he said.

“I am going to plead not guilty, of course,” he told AFP ahead of the trial opening on Thursday.



Nessma TV’s broadcast of the film on October 7, dubbed into the Tunisian dialect, provoked a wave of protests that included an attack on the station’s offices and violent street protests.

“Persepolis,” a globally acclaimed animated film on Iran’s 1979 revolution, offended many Muslims because of a scene showing a representation of God. All depictions of God are forbidden by Islam.

Karoui quickly apologised for the broadcast, but that did not stop the protests.

After an evening of street clashes on October 14, about 100 men firebombed Karoui’s home. He was not at home but his family had to flee.

Witnesses described the assailants, who were armed with Molotov cocktails, knives and swords, as members of the ultra-conservative Salafist sect.

The film’s showing came less than two weeks before historic polls on October 23 to elect a constituent assembly, the first since January’s overthrow of president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Tunisia’s Islamist party Ennahda, which emerged as the largest party after the vote, condemned the violence but also denounced the broadcast of the film as a “provocation”.

Karoui said the case had been brought after a complaint filed by more than 140 lawyers.

“It is scandalous that I should be the one to appear when the people who burned my house down have been released,” he said.

“The new defenders of the moral order in Tunisia want to make an example of me. We are in a moral dictatorship even worse than under Ben Ali. Under the old regime I never had death threats,” he added.

He said he was nevertheless “reasonably confident” about the outcome of the trial.

A small minority of Salafists became increasingly vocal in the run-up to the election, and were blamed for several incidents, including an attack on a movie theatre showing a film on secularism.

After the attack on Karoui’s home, the station accused some imams of having incited the violence and charged that Ennahda, though nominally moderate, had tacitly encouraged it.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/16/177570.html>

- **Egypt detains two in Sinai pipeline bombing**

Police arrest two leading members of al-Qaeda-inspired group in connection with attack on gas pipeline to Israel.

Egyptian security officials have arrested two members of an al-Qaeda-inspired group thought to be behind attacks on a pipeline supplying gas to Israel and Jordan, the official MENA news agency reported Monday.

Abdel Karim Mohammed Ahmed and Ahmed Salem Awad, of the group known as Al-Takfeer wal Hijra, were detained during a sweep in the north Sinai town of el-Arish, a day after one of the group's leading members was held, MENA said.

Another member of the group, Mohammed al-Teehi, was earlier arrested and named as the mastermind of attacks on the gas pipeline and on police stations and installations in North Sinai, a security official said on Sunday.

On Thursday, two explosions hit the pipeline that carries gas through the Sinai Peninsula and on to Jordan and Israel. It had already been attacked six times since

former president Hosni Mubarak was toppled in February.

Egyptian authorities have on several occasions announced measures to step up protection of the pipeline and try to arrest those behind the attacks. Army experts have also located and defused a number of other devices targeting the pipeline.

Israel generates 40 per cent of its electricity using natural gas, and Egypt provides 43 per cent of its gas supplies.

The deliveries to Israel, agreed to under Mubarak, have come under heavy criticism in Egypt. Mubarak's government was accused of selling the gas at a low price.

Egypt's Sinai region is particularly sensitive due to tensions with the Bedouin community living there.

Many goods are smuggled to the Palestinian enclave of Gaza through Sinai, which Israel also charges is used as a rear base for militant attacks against its territory.

The military and police launched a sweeping operation in the peninsula in October to uproot militants blamed for the attacks on the pipeline and a police station in El-Arish.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/20111114134313317156.html>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON / ÜRDÜN

• Blast at south Lebanon hotel popular with UN staff

BEIRUT (AP) — A bomb exploded Wednesday at a hotel frequented by U.N. staffers in southern Lebanon, causing damage but no casualties, a Lebanese security official said.

The official said the blast struck the pub at the Queen Elissa Hotel in the port city of Tyre early in the morning. Rubble littered the pavement outside the hotel, and part of the ground floor was badly damaged by the blast.

Another explosion minutes later damaged a liquor store in the city, also causing no casualties. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

It wasn't immediately clear whether U.N. staffers were the target of the attack at the hotel. The blast shattered the windshield of one U.N. SUV parked outside the inn. Lebanese troops and peacekeepers cordoned off the area after the explosion.



The official estimated the hotel bomb to weigh about 3 kilograms (6.6 pounds), adding that a sample was sent to Beirut to determine the type of explosives used.

Tyre is a predominantly Muslim city and serving alcohol is common at hotels and restaurants.

There have been several attacks against U.N. peacekeepers in Lebanon in the past, most recently in July, when a roadside bomb blew up next to a U.N. convoy carrying French peacekeepers in southern Lebanon, wounding at least five people.

U.N. peacekeepers have been deployed in southern Lebanon since 1978 to monitor the border with Israel. The force was boosted to almost 12,000 troops after Israel and Hezbollah fought a war in 2006.

Under the U.N. resolution that ended the fighting, the mission is monitoring a zone south of the Litani River where Hezbollah is banned from keeping weapons.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27334>

- **Assad loyalists tear down Jordan embassy flag**

Jordan's King Abdullah is seen in an interview with the BBC in London. (AP)

Demonstrators protest against Syria's President Bashar al-Assad gather in Hula, near Homs. (R)

Opposition delegation of the Syrian National Council, led by Chairman Burhan Ghalioun, arrives at the Russian Foreign

Ministry headquarters during their visit to Moscow. (R)

AMMAN, (AFP) — More than 100 demonstrators stormed the Jordanian embassy in Damascus and tore down the flag in protest at King Abdullah II's call for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to go, Jordanian newspapers said on Tuesday.

It was the fourth such protest against embassies of regional powers by angry Assad loyalists since the Arab League voted on Saturday to suspend Syria and impose sanctions against the regime over its bloody eight-month crackdown on peaceful protesters.

"Nearly 120 people protested in front of the Jordanian embassy in Damascus on Monday evening and two of them managed to break into the outside courtyard of the embassy and tear down the Jordanian flag," ambassador Omar al-Amad told the Al-Dustur and Al-Ghad newspapers.

"Syrian security forces did not intervene to prevent the incursion into the embassy compound by these two individuals," the ambassador added.

"By international agreement, the responsibility to protect embassies and other diplomatic missions falls on the host country," Amad said, underlining the protection afforded to the Syrian embassy in Amman despite widespread anger in Jordan over the bloodshed in the Arab neighbouring country.

Jordan's King Abdullah II on Monday became the first Arab leader to openly call for Assad to step down, two days after the Arab League took the rare move of suspending Syrian membership of the 22-nation bloc.

"I believe, if I were in his shoes, I would step down," the king said in a BBC interview. "I would step down and make sure whoever comes behind me has the ability to change the status quo that we're seeing."

King Abdullah said Assad should usher in a new era of political dialogue before stepping down.

"Again I don't think the system allows for that, so if Bashar has the interest of his country, he would step down, but he would also create an ability to reach out

and start a new phase of Syrian political life," he told the BBC.

Syria has reacted angrily to the decision at the weekend by the Arab League to suspend the country from the pan-Arab bloc.

The main Jordanian opposition parties, including the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, called on the government on Sunday to withdraw its ambassador from Damascus in accordance with an appeal from the Arab League made as part of Saturday's package of sanctions.

The bloc's foreign ministers decided to leave the final decision to member states but there has been growing pressure from human rights groups and Arab public opinion angry over a crackdown that has cost more than 3,500 lives, according to the United Nations.

The embassies of Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, seen as prime movers in the groundswell of regional opinion against the Assad regime, had already come under attack.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem on Monday apologies for the attacks on those embassies.

"It is important... that this does not repeat itself. The protection of the embassies is part of our responsibilities," Muallem told a news conference in Damascus.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27319>

- **Lebanese politicians fight over Syria on live TV**

BEIRUT (AP) — Two prominent Lebanese politicians debating the unrest in neighboring Syria have exchanged blows on live television, in an indication of the deep divide between Lebanese factions over their relationship with Damascus.

Pro and anti-Syrian regime demonstrations are common in Lebanon, whose politics have long been heavily influenced by Damascus, now facing increasing isolation over its bloody crackdown on protestors.

The fight late Monday night broke out in a debate between anti-Syrian former legislator Mustafa Alloush and the head of

the Lebanese branch of Syria's ruling Baath party Fayez Shukur.

Alloush called Syrian President Bashar Assad a liar, at which point the two politicians traded insults and hurled glasses of water at each other. The pro-Syrian Shukur then picked up a chair and tried to hit Alloush with it.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27320>

6. SYRIA / SURİYE

- **'Dynamics' in Syria can be changed if Arabs speak in one voice: Ambassador Rice**

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, hailed the Arab League's decision to pressure the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to halt violent crackdown against protesters. (Reuters)

By Al Arabiya with Agencies
New York

U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, hailed the Arab League's decision of a three-day ultimatum to Syria

to halt killing or face economic sanctions "as principled" and "important" on Thursday.

"United States, European countries and a number of other countries have already imposed very tough sanctions against the Assad regime, and I think it would be important if the Arab League chooses itself to levy sanctions, speaks with one voice and make a unified request to the Security Council to follow suit," Rice told Al Arabiya.

"I think if that occurred it may indeed begin to change the dynamics," she added.

Starting from Wednesday, the Arab League gave the Syrian regime three days to halt violence against its people and agree to a peaceful roadmap or face economic sanctions.

"It is time that they Syrian regime to understand that it is deplorable and horrible behavior against unarmed civilians is not going to be tolerated, not by its Arab neighbors and partners, not by the rest of the international community," she said.

Further intensifying the international pressure on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to end his repression of eight months of protests, France withdrew its ambassador from Syria and Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said Paris was working with the Arab League on a draft U.N. resolution.

Western countries have tightened sanctions on Syria and on Monday Jordan's King Abdullah became the first Arab head of state to urge Assad to quit.

Meanwhile, Jordan's Islamic opposition has urged the government to recognize the broad-based Syrian National Council as the representative of the people.

The Front, Jordan's largest opposition group, said in a statement Wednesday that Jordan's government should recognize the council as a "representative of the Syrian people."

It also urged the government to recall its ambassador from Syria. Jordanian officials did not comment. The 230-member Syrian National Council was announced in

September to forge a united front against Assad.

Syrian army defectors attacked an intelligence complex on the edge of Damascus in a high-profile assault early on Wednesday that showed how close the popular uprising against Assad's rule now is to sliding into armed conflict.

Last month Russia and China vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Damascus, but the Arab League's decision last weekend to suspend Syria has given international moves new momentum.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/17/177633.html>

- **Russia likely to remain defiant on Syria**

The Kremlin's desire to project a firm image to the world, the West and its own people in an election season mean Moscow is unlikely to turn on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and seek sanctions or his resignation.

Amid growing global pressure on Assad, Russia's more supportive stance is also

rooted in resentment over Western action in Libya and reluctance to lose one of its few footholds in the Middle East.



And as Europe struggles with a debt crisis and the United States prepares for an unpredictable presidential vote next November, Russia's leaders may have calculated they have little to gain from falling in line with the West.

"Russia believes it is very important to show that it holds a position independent of the United States and the West," said Moscow-based political analyst Yevgeny Volk.

"To withdraw support for Assad, in the Kremlin's opinion, would be seen by the whole world as abandonment of a loyal ally and following in the wake of Western policy," he said.

Russia drew a line in the sand over Syria after voicing anger over NATO air strikes that helped Libyan rebels oust Muammar Qaddafi.

Moscow had let the NATO operation go ahead by abstaining in the U.N. Security Council vote that authorized it, but then accused the alliance of overstepping its mandate to protect civilians. Prime Minister Vladimir Putin likened the resolution to "medieval calls for crusades".

As Western pressure for Security Council action against Syria mounted, Russia emphasized it would not support a resolution that condemned only Assad's government. With China, it vetoed a U.S.-backed European draft last month, saying it would have opened the way for military intervention.

"After that, it's very hard to imagine Russia supporting any actions that could even be interpreted as permission for any use of external force in Syria," said Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of the journal Russia in Foreign Affairs.

For Putin, who has made opposition to Western interference in the affairs of sovereign states a mantra in over a decade in power, to accede to the West on Syria would be a big departure.

Campaign calculations

Polls indicate that Putin, president from 2000-2008 and still Russia's most powerful leader, will have little trouble returning to the highest office in an election next March.

But his approval ratings have fallen in the past year and his ruling United Russia party, always less popular than Putin himself, faces a challenge retaining its constitutional two-thirds majority in a parliamentary election on Dec. 4.

Qaddafi's demise cost Russia billions of dollars in arms sales and jeopardized several oil and infrastructure deals.

Volk said Syria was "practically the only ally of Russia in the Middle East".

It has been a hard-currency buyer of Russian weapons and hosts a naval maintenance facility on the Mediterranean that is the closest thing

Russia has to a military base outside the former Soviet Union.

Syria accounted for 7 percent of Russia's total of \$10 billion in arms deliveries abroad in 2010, according to the Russian defense think tank CAST.

To be seen as giving in on Syria would deepen discontent in the arms industry and hand United Russia's electoral rivals, the Communists and flamboyant nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's LDPR, fodder for campaign rhetoric.

"The number of dissatisfied people in Russia - primarily those in the military-industrial complex whose business will be destroyed - will be quite significant," Lukyanov said.

Of course, if Assad is forced out, Russia's support for him will presumably leave it an even tougher position than in Libya, where it is struggling to restore Qaddafi-era contracts.

But analysts say Moscow has little to lose because opponents of Assad, if they win power, would likely turn elsewhere anyway.

U.S. ties

Russia has urged Assad to implement promised reforms faster and condemned the violence in Syria, but has echoed the government's assertion that its opponents share the blame.

The United Nations says more than 3,500 people have been killed in an eight-month crackdown on pro-democracy, anti-government protests, while Syrian authorities say armed "terrorist" gangs have killed 1,100 soldiers and police.

Hosting a Syrian opposition delegation on Tuesday, Russia resisted pressure to urge Assad to resign and repeated calls for the opposition to hold talks with the authorities.

Syria's growing isolation after its suspension from the Arab League could prompt Russia to tone down its rhetoric. But Lukyanov predicted it would not call for Assad's resignation and would resist pressure for sanctions "as long as possible".

"Russia does not want to take responsibility for the fall of the Assad regime," he said.

In the past, Russia has used what influence it has in the Middle East as a lever in diplomatic maneuvering with Europe and in particular the United States, Moscow's Cold War foe.

Amid a "reset" of strained ties since he took office, President Barack Obama signed a nuclear arms limitation pact with Medvedev and scaled down U.S. plans for a European missile shield that Moscow opposed. Russia supported new U.N. sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program last year and scrapped a missile sale to Tehran.

But with Putin already looking to his own election and the outcome of the U.S. presidential vote uncertain, analysts said his incentive for compromise had diminished, and pointed to persistent Russian complaints about Obama's revised missile defense plan as evidence.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/16/177586.html>

- **Arab League gives Bashar’s regime three-day deadline to halt ‘bloody repression’**

The Arab League on Wednesday gave the Syrian regime three days to halt violence against its people and agree to a peaceful roadmap or face economic sanctions, Qatar’s prime minister said.

The three day deadline has started on Wednesday.



The bloc said it is “giving the Syrian government three days to stop the bloody repression” of its civilian population, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani told a press conference after an emergency meeting between ministers of the 22-member league, joined by a Turkish delegate, in Rabat.

“But if Damascus does not agree to cooperate with the League, sanctions will be adopted against Syria,” he said, adding

that the Arab states had “reached the end of the line” with Damascus.

The Qatari prime minister said that Arab states have ‘reached the end of the line’ with Damascus.

The embattled President Bashar al-Assad failed to co-operate with an Arab League initiative to halt the violence earlier this month, much to the bloc’s concern. Assad had agreed to withdraw military tanks off the streets and order his security forces to cease the crackdown on protesters which has so far claimed the lives of over 3,500 civilians since protests erupted in mid-March.

Earlier on Wednesday, France recalled its ambassador to Syria, Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said, after its diplomatic missions there were attacked amid ongoing protests against Assad’s regime.

“There has been renewed violence in Syria, which has led me to close our consular offices in Aleppo and in Latakia, as well as our cultural institutes and to recall our ambassador to Paris,” Juppe told parliament.

Escalating violence in Syria peaked on Wednesday with an attack by Syrian army defectors on an intelligence complex in Damascus. Meanwhile attacks on the Moroccan, Qatari and Emirati embassies in the capital have been reported by an Al Arabiya source.

The Syrian Revolution General Commission estimated a total of 22 civilians had been killed on Wednesday in clashes with Syrian security forces.

In the northern city of Latakia, pro-Assad mobs had attacked France's honorary consulate and the detached chancery in Aleppo on Saturday, sparking French condemnation and the summoning of Syria's ambassador to Paris.

Embassy attacks

The Syrian government on Tuesday pledged there would be no repeat of attacks on embassies after a spate of recent assaults against countries deemed to be against Assad's beleaguered regime.

"We're working at the (U.N.) General Assembly with the Arab League to get a

draft resolution adopted," Juppe said, according to AFP.

On Tuesday, the U.N. Security Council condemned the recent spate of attacks on diplomatic missions in Syria.

The Jordanian embassy compound was stormed by Assad loyalist protesters on Monday after King Abdullah II became the first Arab leader to say openly that he thought Assad should step down.

But despite Damascus' pledge that there would not be a repeat of embassy attacks, Al Arabiya reported on Wednesday that the Moroccan, Qatari and Emirati embassies in Damascus were attacked by protesters.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Taib Fassi Fihri immediately condemned the attack on the Moroccan embassy, after reports that up to 150 protesters had pelted the building with stones and eggs.

"I condemn the violence against the Moroccan embassy in Syria ... and what is happening inside and outside the Arab embassies," he said in comments to reporters.

An Emirates foreign ministry official confirmed that the UAE embassy in Damascus came under attack on Wednesday as the Gulf state took part in the Arab League meeting.

“The UAE condemns the attack against its embassy in Damascus and the Syrian government bares responsibility for the safety and protection of the chancery and the security of its staff,” said Jumaa al-Junaibi, quoted by the official WAM news agency.

He reminded Syria’s government that international conventions required it to “protect diplomatic missions” on its territory, accusing it of “negligence.”

The circumstances surrounding the attacks on the Qatari embassy in Damascus are still vague.

Other missions targeted by pro-Assad protesters have included those of Saudi Arabia and Turkey; outspoken critics of the Assad regime’s eight-month crackdown on dissent that the United Nations says has cost more than 3,500 lives.

Last month the U.S. Ambassador to Syria Robert Ford was withdrawn because of security threats but is supposed to return to Syria within “days to weeks,” Washington has said.

Turkish-Arab meeting

In a statement issued after the Turkish-Arab cooperation forum in Rabat, the delegates declared they were “against all foreign intervention in Syria.”

“The forum declares that it is necessary to stop the bloodshed and to spare Syrian citizens from new acts of violence and killing, and demands that urgent measures are taken to ensure the protection of civilians,” the statement said.

“Ministers also stressed the importance of Syria’s stability and unity and the need to find a resolution to the crisis without any foreign intervention,” it said.

“Everything must be done to stop the ongoing bloodshed in Syria,” the Arab bloc’s secretary general Nabil al-Arabi told reporters on the sidelines of the meeting of the called to discuss the Syrian crisis.

Arabi said he hoped that Arab moves to send observers to Syria would bear fruit within days, although it is still being met with resistance from army deserters.

But he reiterated that no observers would be sent before a clear agreement is signed between the Arab League and Damascus, which has failed to implement an earlier plan on ending the violence.

Playing into the regime's hands

The United States said Wednesday that the use of violence by the Syrian opposition plays into the Syrian "regime's hands," adding it did not condone violent acts by either side.

State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner was reacting to reports that Syrian army defectors had attacked a Syrian military intelligence base on Wednesday in one of the most daring raids in eight months of unrest.

Toner told reporters that it was "not surprising" that the opposition is resorting to violence in response to the deadly crackdown by President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

"We don't condone it in any way, shape or form but... it's the brutal tactics of Assad and his regime in dealing with what began as a non-violent movement (that) is now taking Syria down a very dangerous path," he said.

He squarely put the blame for the violence on the regime in Damascus.

"We don't condone violence, not on the part of the Syrian military, the Syrian regime, nor on the part of the opposition," Toner said without going as far as condemning opposition attacks.

"We think that this kind of violence... it really plays into Assad's and his regime's hands when this becomes violent," Toner said.

"This was a peaceful movement in its inception and it's only because of the regime's repeated and brutal campaign of violence against innocent protesters that we're seeing the country move down this very dangerous path."

Toner appeared to allude to concerns the country could erupt into civil war with the

risk of events spilling over into neighboring countries.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/16/177567.html>

- **Arab League extends Syria deadline**

The Arab League has offered the government of Bashar al-Assad three more days to stop violence or else face economic sanctions after a previous deadline for Syria to act passed on Wednesday.

The announcement followed the regional bloc's foreign ministers meeting in the Moroccan capital, Rabat, to decide their next move after Assad ignored the ultimatum issued on Saturday.

The Arab League is "giving the Syrian government three days to stop the bloody repression" of its civilian population, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, the Qatari foreign minister, said in Rabat.

"But if Damascus does not agree to co-operate with the League, sanctions will be adopted against Syria."

Sheikh Hamad said that Arab patience with Assad's government was running out, but that it still had time.

"I don't want to speak about last chances so [Syria] doesn't think it is being given an ultimatum, but we are almost at the end of the line," he said.

The Arab League also said it would send international observers to Syria, but only if Syria agreed to the plan.

Meanwhile, Germany, Britain and France are pressing for a UN resolution that would strongly condemn Syria's alleged human rights violations and call for an immediate halt to all violence in the country.

The three European countries decided to move ahead with the General Assembly resolution after the Arab League confirmed its suspension of Syria on Wednesday.

The developments followed a day after 14 soldiers and 17 civilians were killed in violence, according to Syrian opposition groups.

Embassies attacked

Early on Wednesday, crowds supporting Assad vandalised at least two Arab embassies in Damascus.

Large crowds threw stones and debris and sprayed graffiti on the walls of the United Arab Emirates embassy, witnesses told the Reuters news agency. Others attacked the Moroccan embassy, Taieb Fassi Fihri, Morocco's foreign minister, said.

"You bastards, you agents of Israel," read some of the graffiti on the UAE embassy, witnesses said. The embassy is located in the affluent Abu Dummana neighbourhood, where Assad has his home and personal offices.

The Arab League's initial ultimatum to Syria, issued on Saturday, which was supported by 18 of the league's 22 members, including the UAE and Morocco, recommended withdrawing ambassadors from Damascus.

Lebanon and Yemen voted against adopting the decision, and Iraq abstained.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe told his country's parliament on Wednesday that the ambassador to Syria, Eric Chevallier, would be provisionally withdrawn.

"New violence has taken place, and that has led to the closure of our missions in Aleppo and Latakia," Juppe said.

A gang of people armed with knives and clubs broke in to the French consular offices in Latakia earlier this month, Al Jazeera's Jacky Rowland, reporting from Paris, said.

She said the French embassy in Damascus would remain open.

The Syrian government boycotted the Rabat meeting, though Morocco's Fassi Fihri said earlier that Syria would be welcome to attend.

"In light of statements by officials in Morocco, Syria has decided not to participate in the Arab meeting in Rabat," an official in the ministry of foreign affairs told the state news agency. The statement did not give more details.

Boldest attack yet

In what may be a sign of more fighting to come, Syrian activists said on Wednesday that army defectors attacked an intelligence complex in the Damascus suburbs in what appears to be one of their boldest assaults so far against government security forces.

Members of the Free Syrian Army fired heavy weaponry and machine guns at a large air force intelligence complex in Harasta on the northern edge of the capital along the Damascus-Aleppo highway early on Wednesday, a spokesperson for the Syrian Revolution General Commission told Al Jazeera.

The spokesperson said the attack followed a raid by the Syrian army on Harasta on Tuesday and carefully co-ordinated army defections which enabled former soldiers to run away with their weapons.

A gunfight ensued and helicopters circled the area, sources said.

"I heard several explosions, the sound of machine-gun fire being exchanged," a Harasta resident who declined to be

named said. There was no immediate report of casualties and the area where the fighting occurred remained inaccessible, the sources said.

Foreign media banned

Syria's has banned most foreign media from the country and tightly controls access for foreign visitors, making it difficult to verify events on the ground.

"This is probably not the first attack on [a] security headquarters," Al Jazeera's Rula Amin reported from neighbouring Lebanon.

"But what is significant about this attack is that it is in Damascus, the capital. This shows how much trouble there is for the regime."

In addition to other responsibilities, the air force intelligence services work with military intelligence to prevent dissent in the army.

The two divisions have been instrumental in the crackdown on the ongoing uprising against Assad, which the UN says has killed at least 3,500 people since March.

Syria's military is controlled by Assad's brother, Maher, and members of their minority Alawite faith, a sect of Shia Islam.

But the army is composed mostly of Sunni Muslims, who are a majority in Syria and have been defecting from the army in growing numbers.

Syrian authorities have blamed "armed terrorist groups" for the unrest, which they say has caused the deaths of 1,100 army and police personnel.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/20111116194842696136.html>

- **Free Syrian Army commander forms military council**

By Caroline Akoum

Beirut, Asharq Al-Awsat- As members of the Free Syrian Army attacked an intelligence complex on the edge of Damascus on Wednesday, the first such reported assault on a major security facility in the eight-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad, a dissident Syrian officer has confirmed to Asharq al-

Awsat that an interim military council has been formed by the renegade group's commander, Colonel Riyad al-Asad.

Al-Asad announced his defection from the Syrian army on July 4th 2011, approximately four months after the start of the Syrian revolution, and later announced on the 29th of July that he had founded the Free Syrian Army which he would be presiding over.

The dissident officer speaking to Asharq al-Awsat pointed out that the declaration of the military council came after the Arab League's decision to suspend Syria's membership, highlighting that from that decision until today more than 5,000 troops have joined the ranks of the Free Syrian Army, which now exceeds 20,000 in total. The officer confirmed that two days ago Colonel al-Asad had returned to Syria, where he will direct military operations on the ground. With regards to the weaponry to be used in the operations, the officer pointed out that the supplies which the dissidents have managed to smuggle with them are limited, and they are all light weaponry such as machine guns, "RPGs" and "Kalashnikov" rifles.

Regarding the opinion of the Syrian National Council towards the announcement of a military council, and whether there has been any coordination with it in this respect, a member of the [National] Council, Dr. Louay Safi, confirmed to Asharq al-Awsat that “several meetings took place between Colonel al-Asad and members of the National Council, and we were aware of this [military] step. However, a fundamental disagreement remains over the principle of militarizing the revolution, which the the Free Syrian Army and the military council call advocate, or maintaining peace, which the National Council is committed to. There is also the need to ascertain the presence of an organized military leadership and the commitment of those leaders to the political perception of the revolution”. Dr. Safi also pointed out that the National Council does not completely reject the militarization of the revolution, but the revolution should go in accordance with the course of events and the political situation. However, at this moment Dr. Safi indicated that the National Council was insistent upon peaceful marches to overthrow the regime, whilst relying on

regional powers and the international and Arab community.

The official webpage of the military council has published a statement signed on behalf of its commander, Colonel Riyad al-Asad. This confirms the declaration of the military council, which includes in addition to al-Asad nine other members ranked as colonels. As for the objectives of the military council, they have been defined in a statement of 24 articles, the most important of which are to overthrow the current regime in Syria, to protect the Syrian citizens, to preserve public and private property, to prevent chaos after the fall of the regime, and to stand up to any form of retaliation. The council shall undertake the task of counting the recruits, organizing them and the places to station them, arming, equipping and training them, and issuing decisions relating to armed forces. Likewise, the military council will exercise the functions of an amnesty committee, seeking to override all judgments and sentences undertaken by military and civilian courts concerning the events of the Syrian revolution since its outbreak. The military council’s headquarters will be in Damascus, but it will be able to use any

other location if necessary, and it will also adopt the same flag chosen by the Syrian National Council.

The military council has been granted the right to contact foreign governments, organizations or individuals, or military entities within Syrian territory or abroad. It has also announced the formation of a military tribunal for the revolution, in order to hold accountable members of the regime who are proven to have been involved in killings or attacks on Syrian citizens, or the destruction of public or private property. Colonel Riyad al-Asad has appointed a judge for this purpose, and military court provisions will be applied to the tribunal.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27340>

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

- **Thousands of Kuwaitis ‘storm parliament’ and call for the PM to step down**

Thousands of Kuwaitis stormed parliament on Wednesday after police and

elite forces beat up protesters marching on the prime minister’s home to demand he resign, an opposition MP said.

“Now, we have entered the house of the people,” said Mussallam al-Barrak, who led the protest along with several other lawmakers and youth activists also calling for the dissolution of parliament over alleged corruption.

The demonstrators broke open parliament’s gates and entered the main chamber, where they sang the national anthem and then left after a few minutes.

The police had used batons to prevent protesters from marching to the residence of Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah, a senior member of the ruling family, after staging a rally outside parliament.

Opposition parliament members have sought to question the prime minister over claims that government officials illegally transferred money to accounts outside the Gulf country. Last month, Kuwait's foreign minister resigned as the scandal grew.

Pro-government lawmakers managed to vote down a request for the questioning, but opposition groups filed another motion to force another debate later this month.

Kuwait's key affairs are run by the ruling Sabah family, but it has one of the region's most politically active parliaments.

Witnesses said at least five demonstrators were injured and treated on the site.

Some activists said they will continue to camp outside parliament until the premier is sacked.

Chanting "the people want to remove the prime minister," the protesters started to march to the nearby premier's residence when police blocked their way.

This was the first political violence in the oil-rich Gulf state since December, when elite forces beat up protesters and MPs at a public rally, though activists have been holding protests since March.

Tension has been building in Kuwait over the past three months after it was alleged that about 16 MPs in the 50-member

parliament received about \$350 million (259 million euros) in bribes.

The opposition has been leading a campaign to oust the premier, whom they accuse of failing to run the wealthy nation and fight corruption, which has become wide-spread.

Earlier on Wednesday, about 20 opposition lawmakers boycotted a parliamentary session, a day after the government and its supporters succeeded in rejecting a bid by the opposition to quiz the premier over allegations of corruption.

Kuwait has not been hit by major pro-reform demonstrations inspired by Arab uprisings, but the tiny Gulf nation stands out in the region because of its hardball political atmosphere. Kuwait's parliament has the most powers of any elected body in the Gulf, and opposition lawmakers openly criticize the ruling family.

In January, Kuwait's emir, Sheik Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah, ordered 1,000 dinar (\$3,559) grants and free food coupons for every Kuwaiti. Those handouts have been since dwarfed by other Gulf rulers trying to use their riches to dampen calls for

political reform. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah has pledged about \$93 billion for more government sector jobs and services. Last month, Qatar announced pay and benefit hikes of 60 percent for public employees and up to 120 percent for some military officers.

Kuwaitis are used to a cradle-to-grave social security system that has increasingly become a burden on the government.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/17/177601.html>

- **Gunmen kill senior Yemen security officer: official**

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a senior Yemeni security police officer in the southern port of Aden on Wednesday, a local official said, in the latest of a series of attacks during ten months of mass protests against the president.

Colonel Abdulhakim al-Qadi was shot in a busy market and the assailants were able to escape, the official told Reuters. He died at the scene.

Southern Yemen has been the scene of clashes between the army and al Qaeda-

linked militants who have seized three towns during a popular movement to oust autocratic President Ali Abdullah Saleh.



Neighboring oil giant Saudi Arabia and the United States fear spreading anarchy in Yemen is emboldening al Qaeda's regional wing, one of the global Islamist network's most aggressive branches.

In southern Yemen, tens of thousands of refugees have fled to Aden and neighboring provinces to escape the fighting and the army has struggled to regain territory lost to the militants.

Saleh, in power for 33 years, has refused to implement a Gulf-brokered power transfer plan, aggravating protests and bringing the impoverished country to the brink of civil war.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/16/177589.html>

- **'Al-Qaeda-linked' fighters killed in Yemen**

An Iranian, Pakistani and two Somalis among fighters killed in Zinjibar during shelling by army, security official says.



Yemeni troops have killed seven al-Qaeda-linked fighters including an Iranian, a Pakistani and two Somali nationals, in the latest fighting in a turbulent southern province, a security official has said.

The official said on Wednesday that the seven people were killed when the army shelled the headquarters of the local government and the offices of the internal security agency in Zinjibar, provincial capital of Abyan.

The security official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to reporters, said the latest violence in Zinjibar began late

on Tuesday and continued through Wednesday.

For more on Yemen, visit our Spotlight page

The fighting is part of the army's campaign to regain control of Zinjibar and other areas in the south that have fallen into the hands of the fighters since March.

The fighting has forced at least 100,000 residents to flee Abyan province and find refuge in the nearby port city of Aden.

Zinjibar has been held by the fighters since May.

Security has collapsed across much of Yemen as a result of the uprising against President Ali Abdullah Saleh, allowing fighters to take advantage of the turmoil to expand their reach beyond Yemen's remote hinterlands.

Critics accuse Saleh, Yemen's leader of 33 years, of turning a blind eye to the growing strength of the armed groups to support his argument that al-Qaeda would take control of the Arab nation if he were to leave office.

The US has supported Yemen's military in the south and carried out its own strikes against al-Qaeda leaders there, most notably the September 30 killing of al-Qaeda's US-born cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki.

Washington views Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, as the Yemeni branch of the network is known, as one of its most dangerous enemies.

It blames it for a string of attempted attacks on US soil and elsewhere.

Sanaa march

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of people marched in Sanaa on Wednesday, inspired by Arab League discussions to suspend Syria from the bloc.

The anti-government protesters urged the regional grouping to do the same with Yemen as they marched from Change Square, the epicentre of anti-government demonstrations, towards Al-Hasaba, north of the capital, through various neighbourhoods, including one that houses the presidential compound.

"Arab League, we demand the freezing of [Yemeni] membership," shouted the protesters.

"No immunity for the killer," they chanted, in reference to a Gulf plan under which Saleh would step down in return for immunity from prosecution for himself and his family.

Witnesses said troops loyal to Saleh fired into the air to disperse the crowd but no injuries were reported.

Activists say at least 500 protesters have been killed and thousands more wounded since the uprising began in February.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/20111116161332395798.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN / AFGANİSTAN - PAKİSTAN

- **Karzai Outlines Conditions for US Troops Remaining in Afghanistan**

VOA News

November 16, 2011

Afghan President Hamid Karzai says his country wants its sovereignty and an end to night raids as conditions for a strategic partnership with the United States under which some U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan.

Mr. Karzai said Wednesday he does not want parallel institutions set up alongside his government.

He spoke at the opening of the four-day *loya jirga*, or grand council, where more than 2,000 Afghan politicians, tribal elders and community leaders are meeting to discuss relations with the U.S. and possible peace talks with the Taliban.

The meeting in the capital, Kabul, is being held amid tight security, after the Taliban threatened to disrupt the talks.

Mr. Karzai said Afghanistan is open to allowing the United States to have military bases in the country after 2014, saying that would bring money and training for Afghan forces.

He also said the government is negotiating strategic partnerships with Britain, France, Australia and the European Union.

There are more than 130,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan as part of a NATO-led coalition, mostly from the United States. All international combat troops are due to leave the country by the end of 2014.

The U.S. State Department has expressed confidence the assembly will reaffirm the “strong partnership” between the two countries.

But as Afghan leaders plan to discuss how best to combat the worsening security situation in the country, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Asef Rahimi told VOA Tuesday that crops and not guns will determine Afghanistan's future.

Some analysts say government corruption, coupled with incompetence and mismanagement, plagues the reconstruction efforts and contributes to the country's insecurity. But Rahimi sees positive developments, saying his ministry is close to realizing one of its goals of producing enough food to feed all Afghans and sell to others.

On Monday, Afghan security forces killed an attempted suicide bomber outside the venue of the jirga. Two other would-be attackers were arrested.

During a similar gathering in 2010, Taliban militants carried out an attack relatively close to the tent where the jirga was being held, wounding three civilians.

In southern Afghanistan Wednesday, NATO says three of its service members were killed in two separate roadside bomb attacks.

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

- **Afghan president advocates having strategic partnership with U.S.**

KABUL, Nov. 16 (Xinhua) -- Afghan president Hamid Karzai on Wednesday said that having strategic partnership with the United States would benefit Afghanistan.

"Having strategic relations with the United States is in the benefit of Afghanistan, but we have preconditions in this regard. Our conditions are that the United States and NATO forces should stop searching Afghan houses and night operations, should halt

having parallel establishments with Afghan administration and should respect our national sovereignty from now on," Karzai said in his speech at the Loya Jirga or traditional grand assembly.

The parallel establishments, according to Afghan officials, mean that the U.S. and NATO-run civilian-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and private security firms run by foreigners.

President Karzai had in the past criticized the PRTs and night raid operations, calling on NATO-led forces to stop searching houses and harming civilians during military operations.

"Our relations with U.S. should be based in equity and be a relations between two sovereign independent countries," Karzai told the audience in his hour-long address.

In his speech, the Afghan president described Afghans as "lion" and said, although the United States is a powerful and wealthy country dealing with the lion, the lion does not like anyone to kill or take away its kids.

In parts of his speech, the Afghan President pointed out that Afghanistan in spite of having strategic partnership with the United States would also have friendly relations with its neighbors, with China, Russia and assured that "Afghan soil would not be used against anyone".

More than 2,500 people including tribal elders, lawmakers and government functionaries, according to officials, attended the assembly to discuss the proposed strategic partnership with the United States of America and government-initiated peace talks with the Taliban and other armed opposition groups in the militancy- plagued country.

"Any decisions taken by the Jirga participants would be respected and implemented," said Karzai.

The decisions, taken by the four-day Loya Jirga would be forwarded to parliament for ratification.

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

- **3 NATO service members killed in Afghanistan's restive south**

KABUL, Nov. 16 (Xinhua) -- Three NATO service members were killed on Wednesday in two separate blasts in restive Afghanistan' s southern region, the military alliance confirmed here.

"Two International Security Assistance Force service members died following an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in southern Afghanistan today," the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) confirmed in a statement on Wednesday.

Another ISAF service member was killed in a similar incident also in the southern part of the country earlier Wednesday, according to a separate ISAF statement.

The brief statements did not provide details on the incidents and the nationality of the victims under ISAF policy, only saying "It is ISAF policy to defer casualty identification procedures to the relevant national authorities."

Troops mainly from the U.S., Britain, Canada and Australia have been stationed in the southern region, which is branded as Taliban hotbed, within the framework of the ISAF to fight Taliban militants there.

Over 520 foreign soldiers, most of them Americans, have been killed in Afghanistan so far this year.

Wednesday's attacks on ISAF forces happened as the Afghan government opened a traditional Loya Jirga or grand assembly of tribal elders, lawmakers and government functionaries on Wednesday in the capital city of Kabul.

With over 2,500 participants, the assembly aims to discuss the proposed strategic partnership with the U.S. and government- initiated peace talks with the Taliban in the militancy-plagued country.

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

- **Afghanistan Impounds Russian Freight Plane With 'False Tail Number'**

November 16, 2011

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

Afghan authorities have impounded a Russian freight plane belonging to an aviation company at the center of a high-profile case that has raised tensions between Tajikistan and Russia, RFE/RL's Tajik Service reports.

The cargo plane belonging to Rolkan Investment Ltd. was impounded at Kabul airport because authorities said it had a false registration number.

The plane was leased by the UAE-based company AIR Space, which is owned by an Indian businessman.

Kabul international airport spokesperson Yaqubulla Rasuli told RFE/RL that cargo planes rented by AIR Space work primarily with international organizations in Afghanistan and deliver shipments for a supply firm called Supreme Food. Rasuli said the planes are not registered with the Afghan aviation authorities and their registration numbers are false.

The move follows the high-profile jailing in Tajikistan last week of two pilots working for Rolkan Investment Ltd.

The pilots -- Vladimir Sadovnichy, a Russian, and Estonian citizen Aleksei Rudenko -- were jailed for 8 1/2 years on charges of smuggling, illegally crossing the border, and violating international aviation regulations.

The pair flew Russian An-72 cargo planes from Afghanistan to Tajikistan on March 12. The cargo of one of the planes included a disassembled aircraft engine that was not listed on the customs declaration.

On November 14, Tajikistan's Prosecutor General Sherkhon Salimzoda produced a written request from Afghanistan's Transport Ministry to detain the two planes because they left Afghanistan illegally and did not have proper documents.

Russian Foreign Ministry officials slammed the sentences as politically motivated, and in an apparent retaliatory move, Russia's immigration police began arresting and deporting Tajik migrant workers.

Rolkan Investment Ltd official Valery Pfreyfer, who denied the initial RFE/RL report about the Kabul plane, finally confirmed on November 16 that three of Rolkan's planes were leased by AIR Space, which has a large debt to Afghanistan.

Pfreyfer also confirmed that two An-72 planes are impounded in Tajikistan and one An-74 (a modification of the An-72) is

parked in Kabul airport. He said the crew of the third plane are in Afghanistan, but have not been arrested.

Rolkan Investment Ltd is registered in the British Virgin Islands.

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

**This media summary is prepared by ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanrıverdi O and 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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