

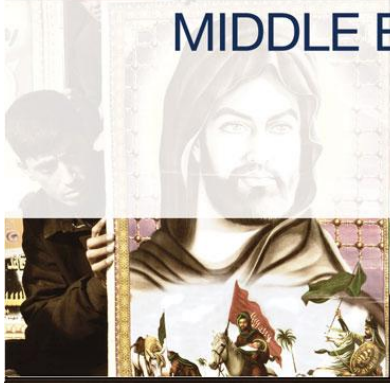
**ORSAM**  
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

# GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

## MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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## 1. IRAQ

- **Mutlaq, Kopler, Gozdkı discuss developing relation with UN and Canada**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Deputy Premier Saleh al-Mutlaq met today the UN representative in Iraq Martin Kopler and the Canadian ambassador to Baghdad, according to a statement issued by his office.

The statement, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, added that Mutlaq and Kopler discussed the situation in the country and the role of the United Nations to find solutions for pending issues.

Mutlaq evaluated the role of the organization and its team in Iraq to find solutions for settling Iraq after the US forces withdrawal at the end of this year.

In another meeting, the statement discussed with the Canadian ambassador Mac Gozdkı bilateral relations, and the Iraqi desire to develop relations with Canada, pointing out the necessity of Canadian participation in investment process in Iraqi construction.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=145721&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145721&l=1)

- **Salah al-Din province continues constitutional procedures on the region question, Governor**

SALAH AL-DIN / Aswat al-Iraq: Salah al-Din's deputy governor stressed today that the provincial council is continuing with the constitutional procedures, waiting the 15-day time table to finalize consultations on this question.

Sabhan al-Janabi clarified to Aswat al-Iraq that "the issue has the support of the people and it is difficult to change their opinions at this stage".

He added that the Council will try to explain the justifications and reasons for such decision to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki during his coming visit to the province.

Janabi denied any sort of inciting sectarianism or establishing a region controlled by the Baathists.

He confirmed that the final decision shall be to ballot boxes.

Earlier, Salah al-Din Provincial Council voted to changing the province into a region.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=145706&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145706&l=1)

- **Iraqi police kill suicide man, wearing explosive belt in Mosul**

NINEWA / Aswat al-Iraq: The Iraqi Police have killed a suicide bomber, planning to attack one of its checkpoints east of Mosul, the center of northern Iraq's Ninewa Province, on Tuesday, a Ninewa Security source reported.

"Ninewa Police have managed to kill a suicide bomber, wearing an explosive belt, targeting one of its checkpoints in Rafa'e district, west of Mosul," the Security source reported announced on Tuesday.

"The Police, who suspected the suicide bomber, ordered him to stop, but he did not respond, thing that forced it to open fire on him, who blew up, but caused no casualties," the Security source said, giving no further details.

Mosul, the center of Ninewa Province, is 405 km to the north of Baghdad.

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article\\_page&id=145717&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145717&l=1)

- **Iraqi Air Force needs 5 more years to sufficiently protect Iraqi air space**

Iraqi Security and Defense Parliamentary Committee assured, on Sunday, that Iraqi Air Force needs 5 years to become ready to protect Iraqi air space. Iraqi government should agree with countries positioned in Kuwait over defense matters, the committee said, warning from current and potential threats against Iraq.

"Iraqi Air Force still needs 4 to 5 years accomplish the first step towards becoming ready to protect and defend Iraqi air space and to offer logistic support for Iraqi Army and Navy," committee member Shwan Mohammed Taha told Alsumarianews. "The government should conclude a new agreement with European and American countries positioned in Kuwait to protect Iraq air space and to provide troops with logistic support," Taha uttered.

"Iraqi Army, Air Force and Navy can decide whether or not Iraqi Security Forces are ready to take control following US troops'

withdrawal,” Taha declared. “Iraq Navy Commander’s report pointed up that the Navy is not geared up on both training and equipment levels, while Air Force Commander assured that his forces are not ready yet to provide air cover and defense against external threats against Iraq sovereignty,” he indicated. adding that “Iraqi Army reports also reveal a deficiency in Iraqi troops ability to protect Iraqi cities and their borders from terrorist threats for lack of expertise, arms as well as logistic and intelligence support.”

“Protecting our borders is a sovereignty matter and our forces require more than military capability for this purpose especially under current and potential threats like the continuous attacks from Iran and Turkey against Iraqi borders, in addition to gossip about potential threats from Kuwait,” Taha revealed. “

Iraqi Ministry of Defense announced, on November 18, that the first military transport aircraft out of 5 others on which it contracted with its Ukrainian counterpart arrived to Iraq. The ministry also revealed that all planes, the cost of which reached 99 million Dollars, will be in Iraq by mid 2012.

Iraqi Air Force Command announced, last year, its quest to buy 96 F16 planes by 2020. Iraqi government, for its part, declared it’s incapacity to conclude such a deal because of its authorities’ expiry and assured that Iraq needs a strong Air Force to protect its sovereignty.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-70894-Iraqi-Air-Force-needs-5-more-years-to-sufficiently-protect-Iraqi-air-space.html>

## 2. IRAN

### • **British activist says US has infiltrated IAEA**

London, Nov 23, IRNA - UK peace activist William J Spring says the IAEA resolution regarding the organisation's suspicions of a possible military dimension to the Iranian nuclear program, indicates US infiltration of the IAEA.

Spring, who is the executive director of an independent ecumenical foreign policy monitoring unit CANAUK (established 1999 as 'Christians Against NATO Aggression'), added: 'This is regrettable.'

'International bodies like the IAEA should be transparent, above reproach, untainted

by corruption, working without hidden agendas and concerned only with empirical facts,' he added.

Talking to IRNA in London, Spring said that the latest report by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is intellectually disreputable, a rearranged concoction of old news, and mixed in with calumnies. 'My suspicions of the IAEA are well founded, while the IAEA's suspicions of Iran have no solid basis.'

A secret State Department cable publicized by Wikileaks and referred to by Mehdi Hassan in the November 14th 2011 issue of the New Statesman says that Yukiya Amano now the IAEA's Director General told the US administration in 2009 that he was solidly in the US Court on every key strategic decision, from high level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

One can understand the Israelis feeling upset on their nuclear monopoly in the Middle East being even implicitly threatened, he noted.

The UK activist further said he was 'very impressed that Iran's Supreme Leader explicitly ruled out nuclear weapons and after numerous inspections there is no indication from the IAEA of any on going weapons program.'

However, he regretted the double standard treatment of nuclear issues in the world. "Israel which never signed the NPT is allowed to continue building its already overwhelming nuclear arsenal, while Iran, which does things by the book and is seeking purely a peaceful use, is threatened both by Israel and the USA and the UK."

Spring also warned the world that "war propaganda against Iran in the West and from the UK Government and the official media, the BBC/Sky conglomerate, has reached new and alarming levels."

<http://www.irna.ir/ENNewsShow.aspx?NIID=30677159>

- **U.S., Israel's endorsement discredits anti-Iran resolution: official**

The secretary general of Iran's High Council for Human Rights has said the fact that the United States and the Zionist regime have voted in favor of the UN

resolution on the human rights situation in Iran brings it into disrepute.

Mohammed Javad Larijani made the remarks after the end of the meeting of the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee) of the United States General Assembly on Monday, in which a resolution condemning the human rights situation in Iran was adopted with support of the U.S., Britain, Canada, France, and the Zionist regime.

According to Reuters, the resolution received 86 votes in favor, 32 against and 59 abstentions.

“Most of the countries that were behind the anti-Iran resolution have an ignominious record and a dark past in this area,” Larijani stated.

Americans in the name of the campaign against terrorism have killed thousands of innocent people in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Zionists have the Palestinians’ blood on their hands, he said.

“This resolution has nothing to do with human rights but like the nuclear issue and their baseless claim (that Iran

sponsors) terrorism is a new round of global hostility against Iran,” he stated.

The issue of human rights has become a tool in the hands of the West to pressure independent countries, he said, adding that Iran has always attached high importance to international cooperation, but major powers should not be allowed to take advantage of the mechanisms, which have been developed to boost international cooperation.

He also said that the Iranian nation is proud of its “religious democracy” as its greatest achievement, and will never be intimidated by Western countries’ hostile actions.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Larijani strongly criticized the United Nations and said that the UN had never been more influenced and exploited by major powers than what it is now.

In addition, the Iranian official condemned repeated violation of human rights in the U.S. and Canada and censured the U.S. for not adopting any resolution against the two countries.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1466878>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **Clinton presses Netanyahu to release frozen Palestinian tax funds**

Israel holds \$100 million in PA tax revenue collected in October as part of economic agreements; should the freeze continue through the end of November, the sum will reach \$200 million.

By Barak Ravid

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton phoned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday night and demanded that he release Palestinian tax revenue that Israel has frozen for more than a month after UNESCO accepted the Palestinians as a member.

A senior U.S. official and an Israeli source familiar with details of the conversation say Clinton called Netanyahu after messages relayed to him in recent weeks on the tax money were not answered positively.



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Photo by: Reuters

The Prime Minister's Office confirmed that Clinton called but said the subject was new sanctions that the United States would impose on Iran.

Israel holds \$100 million in Palestinian Authority tax revenue collected in October as part of economic agreements between the two sides. Should the freeze continue through the end of November, the sum will reach \$200 million.

According to the Israeli source, Netanyahu rejected Clinton's request, saying he lacks a majority in the cabinet on the issue.

Netanyahu added that no decision will be reached on the matter until after a meeting on Thursday between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashal. The two Palestinians are

scheduled to talk about the possible formation of a national unity government.

Clinton's phone call to Netanyahu also comes against the backdrop of urgent requests by Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to the U.S. government. Fayyad says that without the tax money he cannot pay the wages of PA officials, including security workers.

Also on Monday night, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called Netanyahu and demanded that the tax revenue be released to the Palestinians immediately. Ban Ki-Moon noted that Israel is required to transfer the money to the Palestinians under the terms of the agreements between the two sides and added that tensions need to be eased so that peace negotiations can be resumed.

Upset by reports that the PA plans to spend funds to provide housing for prisoners released by Israel as part of the exchange to free former IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, two U.S. congressmen, Steve Israel (D – NY) and Ted Deutch (D – FL), are demanding an inquiry into Palestinian Authority funding allocation.

"The United States does not provide economic support funds to the Palestinian Authority to build new homes for terrorists or fund President Abbas' anti-Israel campaign trips through Europe," said Deutch.

"The American people do not want their taxpayer dollars funding any activity that runs counter to the security of our nation or our ally Israel. We have a responsibility to ensure the Palestinian Authority is abiding by U.S. law with total transparency," Deutch said.

Also, at the end of last week, the U.S. national security adviser, Tom Donilon, phoned his Israeli counterpart Yaakov Amidror. They spoke mainly about the coordination of sanction efforts against Iran, after the International Atomic Energy Agency said this month that the data suggested that Iran was working to be able to build a nuclear weapon.

But Donilon also told Amidror that the United States expected Israel to transfer the tax revenue to the PA immediately.

On Monday morning, Netanyahu met with Deputy Secretary of State William Burns,

who also demanded that Israel unfreeze the Palestinian tax money. The night before the meeting, Netanyahu held a third discussion on the subject, this time with the forum of eight senior ministers. The ministers decided to continue with the freeze.

Around 11 P.M. Monday night, the Prime Minister's Office released its laconic statement on the Netanyahu-Clinton discussion, saying the topic was Iran.

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/clinton-presses-netanyahu-to-release-frozen-palestinian-tax-funds-1.397165>

- **Romney: I would visit Israel first as president**

In Republican presidential debate Gingrich pledges support for Israeli strike on Iran, Paul less supportive.

WASHINGTON - US Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney said Tuesday that his first foreign trip as president would be to Israel.

Romney, the former Massachusetts governor, said during a Republican foreign

policy debate that US President Barack Obama had been unfriendly to Israel.

"The right course for Israel is to care about Israel," he said during the debate with seven other contenders for the GOP nod, held in Washington. "My first foreign trip will be to Israel to show we care about them."

Obama has not visited Israel as president. He visited Cairo early in his term to deliver an appeal for friendship to the Muslim world

Another candidate, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, said he would likely make Israel his first stop, although his first foreign policy priority would be to counter anti-American trends in Latin America.

Among the questions raised at the debate, co-sponsored by CNN, the American Enterprise Institute and the Heritage Foundation, was whether the candidates would join Israel in an attack on Iran to stop it from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Herman Cain, a businessman, said that he would once he had assessed Israel's mission as sufficiently clear.

Newt Gingrich, the former US House of Representatives speaker, said that he would join such an endeavor only if it were a last resort and he was certain it would result in regime change.

He added that not supporting Israel could be dangerous in such a situation, because should Israel feel abandoned, it might resort to nuclear weapon attacks on Iran. Israel does not acknowledge possessing nuclear weapons and has always maintained it will not be the first nation in the region to use them.

The only other candidate to address the question, Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), said that he would not join Israel, but added that he did not believe Israel would launch a strike.

<http://www.jpost.com/International/Article.aspx?id=246650>

#### 4. AFRICA and EGYPT

- **Tantawi speech ruffles Tahrir**

Ahmed Zaki Osman

Heba Afify



Photographed by other

Archived

Less than two hours after the speech by Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, clashes have erupted again on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, a sign that activists and politician say indicates that the nation's military rulers are following the former regime's failed strategy to remain in power.

Eyewitnesses and doctors at a makeshift field hospital said there were an invisible substance causing suffocation and inflammation of the eyes. Reports of protesters fainting were widespread.

Before Tantawi's speech, Egypt's ruling military council held a five-hour crisis meeting with nearly 12 political party representatives and presidential hopefuls earlier on Tuesday. They agreed that a new government would be formed and

that presidential elections would be held by July.

Previously, Egypt's military rulers had indicated that the presidential elections would be held in late 2012 or early 2013.

But Farid Zahran, a leading member of the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, which attended the meeting, said Tantawi did not stay true to those discussions during his address.

"Tantawi's speech is disappointing and doesn't reflect the agreement we had made with the SCAF members who attended the meeting," Zahran said.

Overall, Zahran said he thought the meeting was fruitful, adding that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces agreed to apologize for protester deaths and compensate the victims' families.

"But Tantawi completely ignored all those agreements and gave a speech that has a threatening tone, not a reconciliatory one," said Zahran.

Shortly after he finished his speech, thousands of protesters in Tahrir chanted

slogans reminiscent of those used during the protests that brought down President Hosni Mubarak.

"Leave, leave," they told Tantawi.

The growing similarities between these protests and unrest early this year are not limited to slogans. Political activist and analyst Samer Soliman compared Tantawi's speech to the ones Mubarak made early in the revolution, saying it came too late and offered solutions that were no longer acceptable after the recent escalation.

"It's obvious that time has passed him by, and he doesn't realize what's happening around him, just like Mubarak" Soliman said.

Islam Lotfy, member of the 25 January Revolution Youth Coalition and co-founder of the Egyptian Current party said protesters in the square immediately rejected Tantawi's "disappointing" speech.

Activist Ahmed Maher, coordinator of 6 April Youth Movement, agreed with Zahran, saying, "the speech doesn't

respond to the demands raised by protesters in Tahrir and other governorates. The speech is the same as the speeches of Mubarak in his final days.”

One of protesters’ main demands is for the SCAF to stop running the country’s affairs and allow a new civilian council to step in until presidential elections. Tantawi, however, said he would order the formation of a new cabinet to replace the one that resigned Monday that will still work in conjunction with the SCAF.

"He did not delegate his authorities to the cabinet," said Sameh al-Barqy, a leader of the youth-led Egyptian Current Party.

"The speech did not make any difference," he said.

Lotfy says that there is no point of forming a new government if it is not given real powers.

"It will be like bringing another [Prime Minister] Essam Sharaf," said Lotfy, who insists that none of protesters demands have been met.

"Protesters want a national salvation government that is given legislative authorities to change the current situation where the military council holds all the power and the cabinet only holds administrative powers," said Lotfy.

Maher suggested the speech was threatening in tone.

"The speech plays on emotion and at the same time it frightens people from the instability that might occur if people continue criticizing SCAF," he said. "Furthermore, the speech was full of a tone of betrayal of those who condemn the SCAF’s mishandling of the transitional period."

Some said Tantawi’s statement that the people could send the military back to the barracks with a national referendum was cause for concern.

"The armed forces, represented by their Supreme Council, do not aspire to govern and put the supreme interest of the country above all considerations." Tantawi said.

“He is threatening to instigate another division among the people with this referendum,” said Barqy.

Zahrán said that no one in the meeting with SCAF member had raised the “bizarre issue” of holding a referendum.

“Why would we suggest conducting a referendum while we have two elections [parliamentary and presidential] that would take three months at least? I think that Egypt doesn’t have the luxury to call people to go to the polls three times in nearly six months,” said Zahrán.

Politician Ayman Nour, the former head of the liberal Ghad party, wrote on Twitter that “SCAF didn’t come to power by a referendum so that it will exit power by a referendum.”

According to Soliman, Tantawi’s suggestion of a referendum does not reflect the severity of the situation after the deaths of at least 28 people since Saturday.

“He now has a political responsibility for the killing of protesters, is there such a thing as holding a referendum to

determine whether a murderer would be tried for his crime?” asks Soliman.

Soliman says the only peaceful way to end the protests and clashes is for the military council to step down and appoint an interim government with real powers.

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/517625>

- **Egypt stock exchange halts trading due to political crisis**

AP



Photographed by Mohamed Hossam Eddin

Egypt’s stock exchange says trading has been temporarily suspended amid an escalating political crisis and after the broader EGX100 index slumped 5 percent.

The Egyptian Exchange’s benchmark EGX30 index had fallen by over 4 percent so far on Tuesday, its third consecutive

day of declines as protests and violence in downtown Cairo raised questions about the country's stability days before pivotal parliamentary election are supposed to be held.

Market rules call for trading to be temporarily suspended if the broader EGX100 index moves by more than 5 percent.

The declines built on the previous day's 4 percent slide and dragged its year-to-date decline down to over 47 percent.

The Egyptian Exchange's benchmark EGX30 index fell by almost 3.1 percent within minutes of the start of trade and extended its slide to 3.6 percent by midday, blowing past the 3,800 point level seen by brokers as a key support level.

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/517348>

- **US State Department: Elections are the only solution to the Tahrir crisis**

Arabic Edition

The US State Department expressed deep concern over violence in Tahrir Square during the past few days, confirming that

all parties should focus on running "free, fair elections" this month.

The State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said in a press conference in Washington DC two days ago that the use of violence on the part of the Egyptian authorities or the Egyptian people is not the solution. She called on Egyptian authorities to "exercise maximum restraint," emphasizing that the only solution to the current events is the ballot box.

Nuland added that the US supports the Egyptian peoples' goal of having a democratically elected civilian government. Fairly elected representatives will be able to draft a new constitution that defines the characteristics of Egypt in the coming years, she said.

The US wants to see the Egyptian people express themselves through peaceful balloting and by electing representatives who will draft the new constitution, she added.

In response to a question about whether US President Barack Obama has contacted

the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Nuland said Ann Peterson, the US ambassador to Egypt, is in constant communication with all parties. Nuland added that Jeffery Feltman, an assistant secretary of state, is also in touch with Egyptian officials by telephone.

Nuland confirmed the US desire that SCAF holds elections without delay in order to continue on the path to democracy.

<http://www.almasryalyoum.com/en/node/517566>

- **Gaddafi's son betrayed by his own desert guide**

ZINTAN, Libya (Reuters) - Saif al-Islam Gaddafi was betrayed to his captors by a Libyan nomad who says he was hired to help Muammar Gaddafi's son escape to neighboring Niger on the promise that he would be paid one million euros.

Saif al-Islam, wanted for prosecution by the International Criminal Court, was captured at the weekend in what one official in the country's new government said was "the final chapter in Libya's drama."

With a black scarf wrapped around his head, Yussef Saleh al-Hotmani said that he contacted revolutionary fighters in Libya's south to inform them when Saif's two-car convoy would be passing through the area on the night of November 18.

"I made Saif believe that I trusted him," he said on Tuesday in Zintan, where Saif al-Islam is being held at a secret location before the details of his prosecution are finalized.

On the night of Saif al-Islam's capture, Hotmani said he was traveling with the younger Gaddafi's personal guard in the first car of their convoy.

"I had agreed with the fighters (who captured Saif al-Islam) that the best place for the ambush would be in a part of desert that was surrounded by high ground," he said.

Ten fighters from Zintan, in the Western mountains, and five from Hotmani's own tribe, al-Hotman, were waiting.

"When we arrived at the dark, deep hollow the gunfire was very precise, it only took about half a minute to capture

the first car," he said, adding that he had intentionally told Saif al-Islam's convoy to have the vehicles spaced 3 km (2 miles) apart to give the fighters time to regroup and for Hotmani to join them.

"When the second car arrived, we started to shoot very precisely, to damage the vehicle so he could not escape."

Saif al-Islam, dressed in a long robe and a brown head scarf wrapped around his face, jumped out of the car, tried to run, but was captured, says Hotmani. "We treated him as a prisoner of war."

#### MUTINY OR CONSPIRACY?

It is unclear if Hotmani had planned to ensnare Saif al-Islam from the moment he linked up with the fugitive's group in the Sahara desert, or if he defected when he had doubts about his payment and feared that he might be killed.

The Saharan nomad, who calls himself the "son of the desert," refused to give details on when or how he contacted the 15 fighters of the interim government who caught Saif al-Islam.

"I'm sure (Saif al-Islam and his guards) were planning to execute me when we reached the border. They had two handguns, two grenades, a knife and handcuffs. They were ready to execute me if they had any doubt," said Hotmani. He spoke with the new Libyan flag draped over his shoulder as a show of solidarity with the country's new rulers.

The fighters allied to the National Transitional Council (NTC) who caught Saif al-Islam refer to Hotmani as a "hero."

There was less than five thousand dollars found in the two-car convoy and Hotmani said he was not paid a penny of the one million euros promised to him.

"I didn't ask for an advance payment or anything," he said. "There was no money in the car. This proves that he wanted to execute me at the border."

#### SAIF AL-ISLAM WAS "IN DENIAL"

Proclaiming to know several languages and having run a small tourism agency, Hotmani said he was hired as a desert guide for the group that included Saif al-Islam.

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON

"Saif didn't think I knew it was him. Nobody told me it was him," said Hotmani.

Why Saif al-Islam trusted the man who would eventually betray him is not clear but Hotmani said the younger Gaddafi, who had lost his father and three brothers in a revolutionary war that ended his family's rule, was in denial.

"Saif was dreaming of leaving Libya and then to eventually return," said Hotmani.

Those who were with Saif al-Islam in the hours after he was captured paint a picture of a solitary man, calm and controlled.

The commander of the fighters that conducted the ambush, Al-Ajami Ali al-Ateri, said that on the plane which transferred their prisoner to Zintan where he is being held, Saif al-Islam had asked if it had been the Hotmani that had tipped them off.

<http://asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27405>

### • Explosion rocks Hezbollah arms depot in southern Lebanon

Hezbollah personnel prevent Lebanese security forces from arriving at scene of blast in Siddiqin; UNIFIL says it will investigate incident.

By Avi Issacharoff

A explosion occurred overnight in the Hezbollah stronghold of Siddiqin in southern Lebanon.

The blast apparently occurred at a large Hezbollah weapons depot.



Hezbollah militants during a parade in Beirut, November 2010.

Photo by: AP

Hezbollah personnel prevented Lebanese security forces from arriving at the scene of the blast.

The explosion took place in an area where Hezbollah is prohibited from having weapons under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which ended the Second Lebanon War in 2006.

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said that blast would be investigated.

Last year, there were a number of large explosions at weapons depots in southern Lebanese villages.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/explosion-rocks-hezbollah-arms-depot-in-southern-lebanon-1.397263>

- **Jordan seeks Palestinian respect by offering Hamas a new home**

The thinking in Jordan is that when Assad's regime falls, Hamas will need a new headquarters.

By Zvi Bar'el

Jordan's King Abdullah is not an innovative leader. But last week he surprised Arab leaders and the whole world by becoming the first Arab ruler to call on Syrian President Bashar Assad to resign. "If I were in his shoes, I'd step down," he told the BBC.

This declaration set off a storm. The king's advisers warned him that the statement was likely to damage Jordan's interests - and the kingdom's relations with Syria even more. Right after the interview, representatives of the Jordanian royal court called Fahad Khitan, the editor of the Jordanian newspaper Al-Arab Al-Yawm, to ask him to delay the next edition so they could insert a few corrections.



Jordan and Syria. The king changed his stance somewhat.

Photo by: Reuters

So when the paper came out, the king said "Jordan holds that removing Assad would not change the situation and would not solve the problem." According to an editorial, "the king has not officially adopted the position that Assad should step down; his answer in the BBC interview was made to a hypothetical question, and Jordan does not have an

official stance on the question of Assad's removal."

But the correction arrived too late. In Damascus enraged supporters of the regime attacked the Jordanian Embassy, though Syria apologized the next day. Within a few days British newspaper The Guardian published a report saying the Jordanian king had offered his services as a mediator between the West's position on Syria and the Arab League's, because Abdullah believed that Europe could help reach a solution faster than the Americans.

It's doubtful whether the Jordanian initiative could change the stance of the Arab League, which is dominated by the Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar. They threatened that if a Syrian was invited to the foreign ministers conference in Rabat, Morocco, they wouldn't attend.

A political and legal error

Despite his change of nuance, King Abdullah has not been able to escape his troubles at home. Two weeks after new Prime Minister Awn al-Khasawneh was

appointed to calm Jordan's streets, which had begun to show signs of rebellion, Khasawneh made a startling announcement: "The expulsion of Hamas from Jordan in 1999 was a political and legal error. I will tell you openly, when the expulsion took place, I opposed it."

The statement was made - not by accident - after a phone call to Khasawneh from Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, congratulating him on his appointment as prime minister. According to reports from Jordan, Meshal is expected to make an official visit to Jordan after meeting in Cairo with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to conclude a rapprochement between Fatah and Hamas to establish a unity government.

Khasawneh, a 61-year-old judge who has served on the International Court of Justice, has been absent from the Jordanian political scene for 12 years and did not forge the new approach to Hamas on his own. There have been whispers in Jordan for several weeks now about the forthcoming reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas.

A no less important question is the thinking of Khasawneh, who was once part of a team negotiating with Israel and took part in the reconciliation with Jordan's Islamic bloc, to which the Muslim Brotherhood belongs. This is part of the change in atmosphere required for the regime to prove its intention to "bridge between the public and the government."

The thinking in Jordan is that when Assad's regime falls, Hamas will need a new home - this is likely to be an excellent chance for Jordan to return to the center of Palestinian politics, from which it has been excluded for a decade. In recent years Egypt held a virtual monopoly; only Syria managed to place obstacles in its path and manipulate Hamas.

#### Wild card Qatar

The factor apparently stirring the cauldron between Jordan and Hamas is Qatar, which recently held intensive talks with Abdullah in a bid to advance Hamas' return to Jordan. Jordanian sources say Meshal was to visit Jordan last week, accompanied by Qatar's crown prince, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, but the visit was postponed without explanation.

It appears that Hamas, which has been silent about the brutal repression in Syria, has still not decided which way to go. If Assad falls, and even if Hamas is not asked to leave Syria, the new regime is likely to stop giving it the generous services supplied by Assad.

Qatar could be a comfortable base, but it's far from the territories, while Jordan is conveniently near the West Bank and Gaza, even if it isn't offering patronage on the order of Syria or Qatar. On the other hand, Hamas has had no guarantee that Jordan will agree to the opening of Hamas offices, including a communications network and perhaps logistics bases. Hamas also has a problem with Jordanian public opinion; the Jordanian elite, for example, doesn't understand why Jordan has to reconcile with Hamas after its leadership joined the Syrian-Iranian axis.

A return of the Hamas leadership to Jordan would mark a significant political change in the organization's position. The establishment of a base in a country that has signed a peace agreement with Israel and is committed to Israel's security is not something even Israel can object to.

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/jordan-seeks-palestinian-respect-by-offering-amas-a-new-home-1.397183>

## 6. SYRIA

- **Lavrov: Dialogue Is the Only Way to Resolve Crisis in Syria**



MOSCOW, (SANA)-Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Tuesday reiterated his country's rejection of the foreign intervention in Syria's domestic affairs, saying that economic and political reforms come through dialogue.

During a lecture held at the Free International University in Moldova's capital of Kishinev, Lavrov underlined that reforms in Syria and the Middle East countries should be realized through dialogue with participation of all social and economic spectrums.

He called for rejecting all forms of violence, adding that previous experiments have proved that force from outside won't be an effective tool to solve issues.

Lavrov warned against the sanctions' repercussions, in particular, the armed acts because they lead to crisis, not solution.

He added that the provocative acts by some foreign countries against Syria reveal their endeavors to regain their lost positions in the economic and financial fields on the international levels.

<http://sana.sy/eng/22/2011/11/23/383441.htm>

- **Russian Delegation Stresses Situation in Hama Is Stable Contrary to Media Reports**

HAMA, (SANA)- Members of the Russian delegation, which included parliament candidates, journalists and representatives of popular, civil, student and youth organizations, on Tuesday visited the central governorate of Hama to inspect the city's situation after the sabotage acts it faced by the armed terrorist groups.

The delegation met Governor of HAMA, Dr. Anas Naem, who presented a brief review of the acts of sabotage perpetrated by the terrorist groups which wreaked havoc in the city, blocked the roads and prevented ambulances and fire engines from reaching the targeted places.

Dr. Naem highlighted the crimes of kidnapping, killing and mutilation those groups committed against the civilians and military and security forces, and the state of terror they created in Hama, which prevented students and employees from going to the schools and the state institutions.

He said the city is now living a state of stability, despite some acts are still being carried out every now and then by the armed groups against the citizens and law enforcement forces.

Members of the Russian delegation said the situation in Hama is different from what is being promoted by some media, stressing that the city is living a normal life.

"My impression has changed after seeing the situation in the city. It is stable and safe, contrary to what some media try to promote," said Leonid Isaev, professor of history and member of the Nashi Youth Movement of the United Russia Party.

"What I saw in the city stresses Syria's ability to defend itself and its people against the armed terrorist groups," Isaev added in a statement to SANA.

For her part, Elisa Shishkina from the Movement, said the delegation's visit to Hama gave its members a very good impression about the situation which was depicted as tragic by the media.

"The truth is totally different...The people of the city are good, but I became certain that there were bad persons who did these terrorist acts," Shishkina added.

Mark Syrek said the media presented a picture of Hama as if it is closed and out of the state's control. "However, from the moment we arrived, we found it a calm city with good people who welcomed us."

"I wonder where those opposition crowds the media speak about have gone," Syrek added.

The delegation members also met the students at faculties of al-Baath University Branch in Hama and Head of the University Branch who underscored the importance of the delegation's visit, highly appreciating Russia's stance towards the events in Syria.

<http://sana.sy/eng/337/2011/11/23/383460.htm>

## 7. ARABIAN PENINSULA / THE GULF OF BASRA

- **Bahrain unrest report expected to criticise government**

Anger is still widespread within Bahrain's Shia majority over the crushing of pro-democracy demonstrations

An independent commission in Bahrain is due to deliver a report on the violent suppression of anti-government protests earlier this year.

The commission, made up of international legal experts, is expected to be highly critical of the Bahraini authorities.

More than 40 people have been killed as security forces clamped down on the protests.

The police have also been accused of torturing detained activists.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry was set up in June to investigate alleged human rights violations when the protests were suppressed in February and March 2011.

The five commissioners, all of whom come from outside Bahrain, can also make recommendations on how to end sectarian tensions.

The inquiry has interviewed more than 5,000 people, including hundreds who say they were tortured in prison.

More than 1,600 people have been arrested during the protests, which have continued sporadically since the peak of the unrest eight months ago.

Deep divisions

The BBC's Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, reporting from Bahrain, says the report is expected to confirm that widespread

human rights abuses took place, including the use of torture in interrogations.

In order to move forward we need to find out the truth”

Sheikh Abdulaziz Alkhalifaa

Bahrain government spokesman

Bahrain has a majority Shia Muslim population and the violence has fuelled anger against the ruling Sunni royal family and political elite.

Our correspondent says the mainly Shia protesters will be watching very closely to see how the King reacts when he receives the report.

If the monarch accepts that his government was responsible and acts to change the way the country is run, then the outcome could be positive, our correspondent says.

If not, then more violence is likely to lie ahead.

In advance of the report's publication, the government of Bahrain has already acknowledged some failings.

"Regrettably, there have been instances of excessive force and mistreatment of detainees," it said in a statement on Monday.

A government spokesman, Sheikh Abdulaziz Alkhalifaa, told the BBC: "We are in a very polarised society".

"In order to move forward we need to find out the truth."

"I think the report will tell us exactly what happened since February and only then can we use this as a road map to bridge the divide between all communities here in the country," he said.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15850509>

- **Yemen leader 'to sign deal on relinquishing power'**

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has arrived in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, to sign a deal under which he will step down, Yemen's state-run TV says.

Under the agreement, brokered by Yemen's six Gulf Arab neighbours, Mr Saleh is to transfer his powers to his deputy ahead of an early election.

The president has been facing protests since the beginning of the year.

He has come close to signing a deal several times in the past, only to pull out at the last minute.

Mr Saleh returned to Yemen unexpectedly from Saudi Arabia two months ago, after surviving an attack on his compound in June.

The government crackdown has left hundreds dead and thousands wounded.

What began as peaceful protests against President Saleh - who has been in power since 1978 - has increasingly degenerated into armed conflict involving different tribes and militias.

Five or six provinces are no longer under government control.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15850913>

- **Saudi security forces 'fire on protesters'**

Reports of one person dead and several wounded as police use live rounds to

break up demonstration in Eastern Province.

Saudi Arabian security forces are reported to have opened fire on protesters near the Eastern Province city of Qatif, killing one person and wounding several others.

Ali al-Fefel died after being shot in the chest during demonstrations on Monday night, the AFP news agency reported on Tuesday, quoting medical officials.

The demonstrators had taken to the streets in the town of Shwika on Monday to protest over the death of a 19-year-old Shia man, Nasser al-Mheishi, who died of wounds sustained near a police checkpoint on Sunday night in unclear circumstances.

Protesters have accused police of killing Mheishi. A police spokesman in the Eastern Province declined to comment on the events.

"The police told us that gunmen had opened fire on the police checkpoint... and that my son was caught in the crossfire between the police and the armed men, and was struck by four

bullets," Ali al-Mheishi, the man's father, told the AFP news agency.

A witness later said that one of the policemen at the checkpoint shot Mheishi dead, his father added.

According to locals, the death is the second in the past few days. Qatif residents said another young man was shot by security forces in the Shia town of Awamiya.

In October, 14 people, including 11 policemen, were wounded during clashes in Awamiya between security forces and demonstrators. At the time, the interior ministry in the Sunni-ruled kingdom blamed "outlaws" for the violence.

The overwhelming majority of the estimated two million Saudi Shia live in Eastern Province, which neighbours Bahrain where authorities, supported by Saudi-led Gulf troops, earlier this year crushed a Shia-led protest.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/20111121195944732930.html>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

### ● **Pakistani Taliban announces ceasefire**

Islamabad, Nov 23, IRNA – Pakistani Taliban Tuesday declared ceasefire with the government in a visible move towards dialogue to end the years of bloodshed in the country, local media reported.



Nearly 35,000 people including 5000 security personnel, have been killed in Taliban suicide attacks, bomb blasts and military operations in Pakistan since the country has joined the U.S-led coalition.

A commander of Taliban has been quoted as saying that the group has announced ceasefire and will not carry out attacks.

The commander of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan or TTP, requesting not to be identified, said the group has not carried out any attack since October.

The announcement came just a day after a Taliban commander said that the group and the government have held preparatory talks with the government.

The army and Interior Minister Rehman Malik Tuesday denied any talks have been held with the Taliban, The minister however said Taliban have sent positive signals for the talks. He also said Taliban should shun violence before the talks are held.

A Taliban spokesman Ihsanullah Ihsan also denied reports about the talks. He told reporters in the northwestern city of Peshawar on phone on Tuesday that the U.S should stop attacks, Pakistan army must halt operation and Taliban prisoners be released before the talks are to be held.

Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani had offered talks to the Taliban in October after nearly 60 political leaders had advised the government to hold talks to the militants to end the years of violence in the country. Gilani had warned a military operation in North Waziristan if the talks are failed.

Several senior TTP leaders had welcomed the talks offer and one Taliban leader had suggested mediation by Saudi Arabia to implement any possible agreement.

Pakistani government has held series of talks and signed unofficial agreements with the security forces in the past. Most of the agreements collapsed which resulted into military actions.

An agreement with the powerful Taliban commander Hafiz Gul Bahadar in North Waziristan tribal region is still working and both sides are not attacking each other.

Bahadar, who controls most of the areas in North Waziristan, said on Tuesday his fighters will not oppose a road being built in the region but warned the locals that they would be killed as spies if they joined the construction work.

<http://www.irna.ir/ENNewsShow.aspx?NIID=30676941&SRCH=1>

*\*This media summary is prepared by ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanriverdi O and Sercan Doğan. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national*

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