

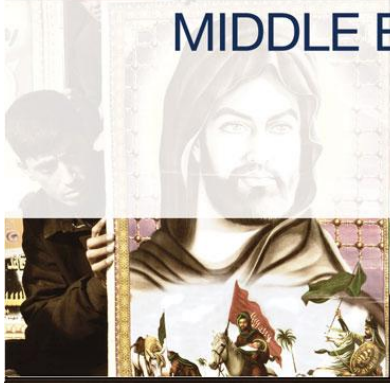
ORSAM
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

www.orsam.org.tr

- * **Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset**
Domestic Policy in the Middle East countries
- * **Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci**
The Restructuring Process of Iraq
- * **Enerji Güvenliği**
Energy Security
- * **Ekonomi Haberleri**
Economy News
- * **Barış Süreci**
Peace Process
- * **Etnik ve Mezhepsel Gruplar**
Ethnic and Sectarian Groups
- * **Devlet-dışı Aktörler**
Non State Actors
- * **Batı'yla İlişkiler**
Relations with the West





MIDDLE EAST BULLETIN
GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ
26 DECEMBER / ARALIK 2011
NO: 1291

1. IRAQ / IRAK	3
• US Intelligence warns of violence after pullout from Iraq	3
• Iraq Christians cancel Christmas celebrations.....	3
• Maliki calls to equip Iraq Forces	3
• Iraq postpones meeting with Syrian opposition	4
• Shiite leader says Hashemi “playing with fire”	5
• Khalis demo demands Hashemi handover.....	6
• İraqiya rejects Maliki's call for top level meetings	6
• Sadr: Hashimi’s case must be viewed by Parliament, people in accordance with the Constitution.....	7
• Criticism over Turkish offer to receive Hashimi, MP	8
• Başkan Dıhok’ta Halk Toplantısı Düzenledi	8
• Irak Kaygı Verici Bir Sürece Girdi	9
• Iraq president demands fair trial for VP.....	10
• Suicide bombing rocks Iraq as Biden urges ‘dialogue’ to head off political crisis.....	12
2. İRAN / İRAN	14
• DM: Missile Shield in Turkey Signifies West's Military Weakness	14
• Syrian FM Assures Tehran of Pursuing Fate of Abducted Iranian Nationals.....	16
• İran-Suriye Dışişleri Bakanları telefonla görüştüler.....	17
• Velayet-90 deniz tatbikatı başladı	17
• Eşref Kampı saldırıya uğradı	18
• İran Dışişleri Bakanı Yardımcısı Moskova’da	18
• İran ve Ermenistan Cumhurbaşkanı, tüm ülkelerin barışçıl nükleer enerji hakkı üzerinde durdular.....	19
• Iran begins naval drills in Strait of Hormuz	19
3. İSRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN	21
• Iran Defense Minister: Israeli strike would be a suicide mission	21
• Israeli MKs to discuss recognizing Turkey's Armenian genocide	22
• PA negotiator: We may withdraw recognition of Israel.....	24
• FM: Now isn't the time for peace with Palestinians	26
• Israeli FM: Abbas is not peace partner.....	28
4. AFRICA and EGYPT / AFRİKA ve MISIR.	29
• Activist blogger freed in Egypt.....	29
• Islamist parties consolidate Egypt poll gains.....	30
• Egypt: Salafist to respect peace agreement with Israel	31
• Sudan says kills Darfur rebel leader -SUNA message	31
• Canada concerned forces worse than ousted Mubarak could rise to power in Egypt	32
• Thousands march in Casablanca for political change.....	33



5. JORDAN and LEBANON / ÜRDÜN.....	35
• Hundreds protest near Jordan PM's office.....	35
• Security source denies existence of Al Qaeda cells in Lebanon	36
• Charbel questions credibility of Ghosn's reports on al-Qaida	37
6. SYRIA / SURİYE.....	38
• Syrian activists denounce 'siege' of Homs.....	38
• Syria: differences within Opposition emerge.....	40
• Arab observers to visit Syria flashpoints Tuesday; opposition urges U.N. to end crisis.....	42
• Saldırıları Krizin Çözülmesi Çabalarını Hedefliyor.....	46
7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA / ARAP YARIMADASI VE BASRA KÖRFEZİ	47
• Yemen forces attack 'March for Life'.....	47
• Protestors demand Yemeni VP's resignation; intelligence chief killed in Aden.....	48
• Saudi to let foreign carriers fly domestic routes	50
8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN / AFGANİSTAN - PAKİSTAN	52
• Eleven Killed In Afghan Coal Mine Explosion	52
• 'Afghan civilians killed for no reason'	52
• U.S. military chief emphasizes "zero tolerance" for bullying in forces	53
• NATO copter makes emergency landing	54
• UK soldier wounded in Afghanistan dies.....	55
• Report: CIA Suspends Drone Attacks in Pakistan	56

1. IRAQ / IRAK

- **US Intelligence warns of violence after pullout from Iraq**

The American Intelligence Agency warned that security gains in Iraq could turn into sectarian violence after US forces' withdrawal from the country.

Current incidents in Iraq shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, House of Representatives intelligence committee chairman Mike Rogers said.

Assessments that were coming out believed that the sudden rapid withdrawal with no troop presence on the ground was going to leave this vacuum that would be filled with the kind of problems that you're seeing, Rogers added, a source reported to Alsumaria.

US troops' pullout reduced US influence, he advanced concluding that a chaotic Iraq plays into Iran's desire for increased influence in that region.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-72074-US-Intelligence-warns-of-violence-after-pullout-from-Iraq.html>

- **Iraq Christians cancel Christmas celebrations**

Iraqi Archbishop of Chaldeans in Kirkuk and Sulaymaniah Louis Sako announced, on Wednesday, that Christians in Kirkuk decided to mark the season of Christmas in church masses and cancel Christmas celebrations due to Iraq's crisis and the continuous targeting of Christians.

"Kirkuk's Christians will not hold Christmas celebrations but will mark this occasion in church masses and pray for security and stability in Iraq," Archbishop Sako told Alsumarianews.

"Instable security in Iraq in general and Kirkuk in particular, the continuous targeting of Christians in Mosul, incidents of Badinan of Kurdistan in addition to other situations in Iraq led Christians to cancel Christmas celebrations," he explained, a source told Alsumaria.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-72040-Iraq-Christians-cancel-Christmas-celebrations.html>

- **Maliki calls to equip Iraq Forces**

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki called, on Thursday, to promptly kit out Iraqi forces with necessary equipment and machinery. The US Army Chief of Staff for his part stressed that his country is willing to cooperate with Iraq through training, preparing and arming of Iraqi forces.

“Cooperation between Iraq and the US must be maintained for the interest of both countries,” Maliki said in a statement, which Alsumarianews received a copy of, before receiving US Army Chief of Staff Raymond Odierno. “We should accelerate the process of providing Iraqi forces with necessary equipment and machinery,” he urged, a source told Alsumaria.

“The US is willing to cooperate with Iraq by training, equipping and arming Iraqi forces,” US Army Chief of Staff Raymond Odierno stressed for his part.

Iraqi government had announced, on December 15, that Iraqi Forces can be counted on to a certain extent despite current challenges. US trainers’ issue will be settled according to Iraqi forces’ needs and arm deals, the government assured.

Baghdad witnessed, on Thursday, a series of explosions with car bombs and

explosive belts. The blasts that exploded in different regions of the capital led to the death of 57 people and the injury of 176, Iraqi Ministry of Health reported.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-72037-Maliki-calls-to-equip-Iraq-Forces.html>

- **Iraq postpones meeting with Syrian opposition**

BAGHDAD, Dec. 25 (AKnews) – The Iraqi government has postponed a meeting with Syrian opposition leaders. The event was part of its efforts to convince Syrian authorities and the opposition to come to an agreement over the current unrest in Syria and avoid external intervention.

The meeting was expected to be held today but due to travel issues facing some of the members of the opposition, according to government adviser Abdul Hussein al-Jabiri.

“Iraq is trying to convince both the Syrian opposition and the Syrian authorities to sit at a table and find a way to end the protests and disputes between both sides,” al-Jabiri said.

Iraq's efforts to mediate talks between the Syrian authorities and the opposition on the one hand, and the Syrian authorities and the Arab League on the other came after Arab League Secretary-General Nabil al-Arabi visited Iraq earlier this month. He urged the Iraqi government to exert its influence to persuade Syria to sign a peace deal set forward by the League in order to put an end to the violence.

Syria signed the deal on Dec. 20 after an Iraqi delegation visited Syrian President Bashar al-Asad and later visited Arabi in Cairo.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/280327/>

- **Shiite leader says Hashemi “playing with fire”**

BAGHDAD, Dec. 25 (AKnews) – Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi is playing with fire if he tries to interpret an arrest warrant against him on terror charges as an attempt to sideline the Sunnis in the country, says Shiite M.P.

Hashemi has been wanted by court for allegedly ordering his guards to carry out attacks in Baghdad against mainly Shiite

military and political leaders. Several of his guards have been detained on such charges and their televised confessions have been aired by state-run broadcaster Al-Iraqiya TV.

The Vice President however has accused Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki of plotting against the Sunnis who held power in Iraq for more than six decades.

Kamal al-Saidi, a leader in the National Coalition led by Maliki, told AKnews: “Hashemi is trying to fabricate an image that his trial is an attempt to target the Sunnis in Iraq which a dangerous. It is a criminal case that has nothing to do with sectarianism.”

“Hashemi is playing with fire and is acting irresponsibly,” Saidi said. “To drag the sectarianism into a personal issue is to try to involve innocents in the issue,” he warned.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis were killed at the height of the sectarian war in Iraq in 2006 and 2007, an average of 49 a day were killed in gunfire and 19 a day in bomb attacks. A surge in U.S. troop numbers to try and put a lid on the

bloodshed. At their peak U.S. military personnel numbered 170,000.

The Shiite politician called on Hashemi to appear before court and that “if he is involved in a crime no Sunni should defend him.”

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/280382/>

- **Khalis demo demands Hashemi handover**

DIYALA, Dec. 25 (AKNews) – Hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in Khalis district, Diyala Province, on Sunday calling on the leaders of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region to turn Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi over to Baghdad to be put on trial for terrorism.

Uday Khudran, Mayor of Khalis, told AKnews that demonstrators had handed them a document calling on the Kurdish Regional Government to stand aside and turn Hashimi in to Iraqi authorities in Baghdad.

Al-Hashimi has been staying in Kurdistan Region since an arrest warrant was issued for him in Baghdad. He hopes he will not

be turned in by the Kurdish leaders. He has also said he will appear before a court provided that the hearings are held in Kurdistan Region because, he said, courts in Baghdad have been politicized.

Kurdish leaders, among the President of Kurdistan Region Masoud Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani have said a fair and just trial has to be guaranteed for Hashimi before he appears in court.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/280357/>

- **Iraqiya rejects Maliki's call for top level meetings**

BAGHDAD, Dec. 26 (AKnews) - Iraqiya List led by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi on Sunday rejected the Council of Ministers' invitation to a top level meeting of political leaders to resolve the current crisis.

Iraqiya member Wahda al-Jumaili told AKnews his party rejected the request because the political blocs are not employees of the government. The Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki should have called the blocs as the head of the Dawa party

and not as an order issued by the Council of Ministers, he added.

The Iraqi judiciary issued arrest warrant against Vice President and senior member of Iraqiya Tariq al-Hashemi on Dec. 19, one day after the U.S. soldiers left Iraq. Hashemi is accused of running an assassination squad, using his bodyguards as hit men to take senior political and military leaders.

He denies the charges against him and has fled to Kurdistan Region where he has remained, demanding his case be heard before a Kurdish court as he says he will not receive a fair trial in Baghdad. The demand has been refused.

Maliki, in what many regard as a long-planned putsch against his coalition partners Iraqiya, sacked his deputy Saleh al-Mutlaq and is investigating the Finance Minister Rafie al-Issawi on suspicion of funding and supporting terrorists in Falluja in 2008, a time when he was running the city's main hospital. Both men are senior Sunni members of Iraqiya List.

On Dec. 21 Maliki threatened to replace eight Iraqiya ministers in his cabinet if

they continued to boycott the government, suggesting he would form a government without his Iraqiya coalition partners.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/280468/>

- **Sadr: Hashimi's case must be viewed by Parliament, people in accordance with the Constitution**

Baghdad (NINA) – Leader of the Sadrist Trend, Muqtada al-Sadr, said, “The issue of bringing Tariq al-Hashimi before court must be viewed by Parliament and the people, even dismissing him must be according to the law, not in any other way.

The Sadrist Political Body quoted Sadr saying, “Bringing up the confessions against Hashimi at this time harm the country's unity and security.”

He pointed out that among the harms that will occur is the political process's collapse.

He added that this will lead to a one party rule which put it in control of the peoples' fate.

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

- **Criticism over Turkish offer to receive Hashimi, MP**

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Independent MP Alia Nsaif criticized Turkish interventions in vice-president Tariq al-Hashimi's case by readiness to receive him.

In a statement issued by her media office, copy received by Aswat al-Iraq, she added "Turkey began negatively intervening in Iraqi internal affairs, which might to affecting bilateral relation between the two countries".

She added that the Turkish invitation to receive Hashimi stirred public uproar.

"Turkey knows clearly the volume of economic, trade and investment relations with Iraq, so it is wrong to venture their future", she added.

Iraqi Interior Ministry disclosed issuing an arrest warrant against Hashimi and broadcasted the confessions of his

bodyguards for operating assassination attempts and bombings in 2009.

These political developments come at the time of US forces withdrawal, according to the agreement signed between the two countries at the end of 2008.

http://en.aswataliraq.info/%28S%284mhdqq45jilpobyxpru1i5vh%29%29/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=146200&l=1

- **Başkan Dıhok'ta Halk Toplantısı Düzenledi**

Bizim için önemli olan Kürdlerin haklarıdır.



Dihok /23-12-11(PNA)- Dün Dıhoka giden Başkan Barzani bugün Dıhok'ta eğitim görevlileri,Dıhok'taki farklı kesimlerin temsilcileri ve halkın katılımı ile bir toplantı düzenledi.

Başkan toplantıda ki konuşmasında, Kürdistan'da ki birlikte kardeşçe yaşam kültürünün korunması gerektiğini ve kendisini de bu kültürü korumak için elinden gelen her şeyi yapacağını ve ayrıca uluslar arası alanda sağlanmış olan bu kültüre büyük bir değer biçildiğini belirtti.

Başkan, kısa bir süre önce vuku bulan otel, masaj salonu, içki satış noktaları ve KİB'nin binasının yakılmasının büyük bir hata olduğunu, bunun tekrarlanmaması gerektiğini ve oluşturulan araştırma komisyonunun hazırlayacağı rapor ışığında gerekenin yapılacağına vurgu yaptı.

Başkan, Kürdistan Bölgesin'de yasa olduğunu herşeyin yasalara uygun yapılmasını ve din adamlarının vefalar çıkarmamalarını halka nasihatlerde bulunmaları gerektiğine değindi.

Başkan Irak'ın siyasi durumu üzerine “ aylar önce bir toplantıda ABD askerlerinin çekilmesi sonrası durumun çetrefilli bir hal alacağını söylemiştim. Ve şimdi karışıklık çıkmış durumda. Ortada mahkemelik bir durum varsa bu konuda mahkeme konuşur ve bu onun görevidir. Ancak siyasi tarafların dilag yolunu seçmesi ve çözüme gitmesi gerekiyor. Eğer Irak mezhep

çatışmalarına doğru evrilirse Kürdler bundan uzak durmalı” dedi.

Diğer parçalarda ki Kürdlerin durumu üzerine Başkan “ PJAK ile İran çözüme yaklaşmışlar. Umut ediyorum ki Türkiye'de de Kürdlerin durumu bir çözüme ulaşsın. Ben hep söylüyorum ki savaş kalmamalı. Çünkü Kürdler için Türkiye'de altın bir fırsat oluşmuş durumda.”

Suriye konusunda Başkan “ bizim için önemli olan kimlerin Suriye'de iktidar olacağı değildir. Bizim için önemli olan kimlerin Kürd halkının haklarını garanti edeceğidir.”

<http://www.peyamner.com/Turkish/PNAnews.aspx?nID=260438>

• Irak Kaygı Verici Bir Sürece Girdi

Haber Merkezi/22-12-11(PNA)- Irak'ın Cumhurbaşkanı Yardımcısı Tarık el Haşimi, ülkenin Başbakanı Nuri El Maliki'yi hakkında tutuklama emri çıkararak ülkeyi krize sürüklemekle suçladı.

Haşimi BBC'ye yaptığı açıklamada, saldırıların sorumluluğunun hükümete ait olduğunu belirtti.

Haşimi, Başbakan Maliki'nin kontrol edilmesi kolay olmayan bir süreç başlattığını, Iraklıların yaşananlardan kaygı duymakta haklı olduğunu savundu.

Hafta başında teröre destek vermek ve bazı saldırıların arkasında olmakla suçlanarak hakkında tutuklama emri çıkarılan Haşimi, ülkedeki en üst düzey Sünni siyasetçiydi.



Bu nedenle hakkındaki tutuklama emri, ülkenin yeniden mezhep çatışmasına sürüklenmesi endişesi yarattı.

Tutuklama emrine tepki olarak ülkenin en büyük laik-Sünni bloğu olan El Irakiye parlamentoyu boykot etme kararı almış, Haşimi Kürdistan Bölgesine gelmişti.

Haşimi hükümetin güvenlik alanındaki kaynaklarını yanlış yerlere yönlendirdiğini bunun da bu gibi saldırılara ortam yarattığını savundu.

"Bu güvenlik kuvvetleri ve silahlı kuvvetlerin liderleri açısından büyük bir

zaaf çünkü katilleri ve teröristleri kovalamak yerine yurtsever siyasetçilerin peşine düşüyorlar." dedi.

Haşimi "dün olanlar da güvenlik kuvvetlerinin görev tanımı konusunda denetimden yoksun olduğumuzu kanıtladı; güvenlik kuvvetleri yanlış yere yönlendiriliyorlar" diye konuştu.

Ülkedeki son ABD askerlerinin de çekilmesinden bir kaç gün sonra düzenlenen saldırıları üstlenen olmadı.

Ancak ülkenin ulusal güvenlik danışmanı Muvaffak el Rubai, saldırının arkasında El Kaide'nin olduğuna inanıyor.

Rubai, BBC'ye "El Kaide siyasi görüş ayrılıklarını ve ihtilafları kullanmaya çalışıyor" dedi.

Maliki'ye yakın isimlerden olan Rubai, hükümet ile Sünni Başbakan yardımcısı ve Cumhurbaşkanı yardımcısı arasındaki gerilimin ise siyasi olduğunu; altında mezhep ayrımı aranmaması gerektiğini kaydetti.

<http://www.peyamner.com/Turkish/PNAnews.aspx?nID=260432>

- **Iraq president demands fair trial for VP**

BAGHDAD, (AFP) — Iraq's President Jalal Talabani said Saturday that the country's Sunni vice president, who stands accused of running a death squad, would stand trial only if promises were made regarding its fairness.

His remarks come with the country mired in a political row, with an arrest warrant out for Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi, and Shiite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki calling for the sacking of his Sunni deputy after the latter called him a dictator "worse than Saddam Hussein."

Iraqiya, the mostly Sunni-backed political bloc of Hashemi and deputy premier Saleh al-Mutlak, has boycotted parliament and the cabinet in protest at Maliki's alleged centralisation of power.

"Mr Tareq al-Hashemi is in the hospitality of the president of the republic," a statement from Talabani's office said.

"Hashemi will appear in front of justice at any time and anywhere in the country where there will be reassurances regarding the processes of justice, investigation and trial."

The statement did not specify what specific reassurances would be required.

Iraq's political crisis, coupled with a spate of attacks on Thursday in Baghdad which killed 60 people, has heightened sectarian tensions in the country less than a week after US troops completed their withdrawal.

Hashemi, who has disputed the charges, meanwhile, blamed collusion within the government and security forces for Thursday's violence, the deadliest in more than four months.

"This style of terrorist attack, it's well beyond even Al-Qaeda to do it," he told the BBC's Persian Service in comments published on Saturday.

"What has been done is well-organised, the people who plant all these explosives. They went freely, without any obstacles, regardless of many checkpoints that we do have, and simultaneously all these car bombs and explosives went off in one time."

He continued: "Those who were behind all these explosions and incidents (were a)

part in the security of the government. I'm sure about that."

On Friday, Hashemi blamed Maliki for starting "a national crisis, and it's not easy to control," and likened the premier's behaviour to that of now-executed dictator Saddam Hussein.

Maliki convened a meeting of his crisis-response cell on Saturday, a statement from his office said, in which he admitted Iraq's security forces must examine whether "there are members in these forces cooperating with terrorist groups."

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu, meanwhile, said Hashemi should stay in Iraq, but noted Ankara would not turn him away if he requested asylum.

"What would be appropriate for us is that Mr Hashemi should stay within the Iraqi territory," he said in remarks broadcast by the state-run Turkish Radio and Television.

Davutoglu said the gravity of the allegation faced by Hashemi could not be minimised, and "must be clarified as soon as possible."

Earlier on Saturday, anti-US Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr launched an "honour convention" which called for national unity and peace in Iraq following the US withdrawal.

The pact was signed by numerous lawmakers, academics and tribal leaders.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27827>

- **Suicide bombing rocks Iraq as Biden urges 'dialogue' to head off political crisis**



A suicide bomber in a car killed at least six people and wounded 31 more when he detonated explosives outside Iraq's interior ministry in Baghdad, police and hospital sources said on Monday, as Washington called on Iraq's feuding leaders to start a "dialogue" to avoid possible sectarian tensions.

The blast followed Thursday's wave of explosions that killed at least 72 people in Baghdad in the first such attacks since a crisis erupted between Iraq's Shiite-led government and Sunni rivals days after the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops, Reuters reported.

An interior ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the explosion was the work of a suicide car bomber. State broadcaster al-Iraqiya TV also reported this as the cause of the attack.

Iraq is mired in a political row with authorities calling for the arrest of Sunni Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi on charges he ran a death squad, accusations Hashemi denies, according to AFP.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has also called for the sacking of his Sunni deputy Saleh al-Mutlaq, who has denounced the premier as a dictator "worse than Saddam Hussein."

Meanwhile, the Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc of Hashemi and Mutlaq has boycotted cabinet and parliament.

Meanwhile, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden on Sunday urged Iraq's feuding leaders to convene a "dialogue" to head off a worsening political crisis that has raised sectarian tensions.

Biden, President Barack Obama's point man on Iraq, has made a flurry of calls to Iraqi leaders this week, urging them to mend fences after Maliki accused Hashemi of running a death squad staffed by bodyguards.

In calls to Maliki on Sunday and to Kurdish leader Massud Barzani on Saturday, Biden "exchanged views... on the current political climate in Iraq and reiterated our support for ongoing efforts to convene a dialogue among Iraqi political leaders," the White House said in a statement, according to AFP.

Biden also offered condolences after a spate of attacks in Baghdad on Thursday that killed scores of people.

The strikes and the growing political row have heightened sectarian tensions just a week after the last U.S. soldiers of a force that once numbered 170,000 left Iraq, drawing the nine-year war to a close.

Hashemi -- holed up at an official guesthouse of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani in the country's autonomous Kurdish region after an arrest warrant was issued against him -- has acknowledged that his guards may have carried out attacks but denied any personal involvement.

Asked if he would return to Baghdad to face trial, the 69-year-old Hashemi told AFP: "Of course not," attributing his refusal to poor security and the alleged politicization of the justice system.

Hashemi's Iraqiya bloc, part of Maliki's national unity government, has boycotted parliament and the cabinet in protest at the prime minister's alleged centralization of power.

The New York Times, citing senior U.S. administration officials, reported that the United States is weighing a far more subdued role in Iraq and has no intention to send U.S. troops back to the country.

But it quoted one administration official as saying the future security and diplomatic relationship with Iraq would be "colored"

by how well Maliki holds together a governing coalition that includes Sunnis and Kurds.

The newspaper also noted that U.S. commandos may be able to operate in Iraq on covert CIA missions like the one that killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in May.

"As the U.S. military has drawn down to zero in terms of combat troops, the U.S. intelligence community has not done the same," it quoted a senior administration official as saying.

"There are serious counterterrorism issues that confront Iraq... And we don't want to let go of the very solid relationships we have built over the years to share information of importance to both countries."

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/26/184585.html?PHPSESSID=i6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

2. IRAN / İRAN

- **DM: Missile Shield in Turkey Signifies West's Military Weakness**

TEHRAN (FNA)- NATO's plan to deploy a missile shield in Turkey demonstrates the US and European states' military and political weakness, Iranian defense minister stated.



"The NATO missile shield is a show of power on the surface but, in fact, shows the enemy's weak position and helplessness," Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi told Jam-e Jam satellite network on Sunday.

"On the other hand, if Europeans see themselves in need of such missile shield against Iran why don't they take any action in this regard and it is just the US which talks about this plan and advertises it," the Iranian defense minister stated.

Late in November, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Commander Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh warned that Tehran will target

the NATO missile shield in Turkey in case it comes under attack.

"We have prepared ourselves, if any threat is staged against Iran, we will target NATO's missile shield in Turkey and will then attack other targets," General Hajizadeh said addressing a congregation of 10,000 Basij (volunteer forces) members in the Western town of Khorramabad at the time.

He further described deployment of the NATO missile defense system in Turkey as a deceitful move, saying that the NATO is misusing Turkey to save the Zionist regime.

Many analysts believe that the NATO's anti-missile system to be deployed in Turkey will be aimed at Iran.

Iranian officials have called on Turkey to reverse its decision for hosting the missile shield and withdraw from the plan. Tehran officials have repeatedly cautioned Ankara that the system is meant to create a shield for Israel and is thus seen as a threat to Iran.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9007278892>

- **Syrian FM Assures Tehran of Pursuing Fate of Abducted Iranian Nationals**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem in a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Salehi assured Tehran of his country's serious efforts to pursue the fate and secure the safe release of the five Iranian engineers who were abducted by unknown gunmen in Homs city last week.



"Based on its responsibility, the Syrian government will make its best efforts to set the abductees free and return them to their families as soon as possible," Muallem said during the phone conversation on Sunday.

Salehi, for his part, expressed concern about the fate of the abducted Iranians in Syria.

On Wednesday, Iran's embassy in Damascus confirmed reports that eight technicians including five Iranian electrical engineers were kidnapped in the Syrian city of Homs. The group of engineers was abducted on December 20 en route to the 450-MW power plant they were involved in building in Homs at 6:30 a.m. local time.

Elsewhere, Salehi also condemned the recent terrorist bombings in Syria which killed over 50 people in the country, and extended his condolences to the Syrian government, nation and the bereaved families of the victims.

The Friday attacks in Damascus hit two bases belonging to the Syrian security service, killing 55 people.

Syrian state media blamed the attacks on the al-Qaeda, but analysts believe that the surge in terrorist blasts in Iraq and Syria at a time of the US military withdrawal from Iraq is much suspicious.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9007278888>

- **İran-Suriye Dışişleri Bakanları telefonla görüştüler**

Suriye, kaçırılan İranlıları bulmak için yoğun çaba halinde!



FHA- Suriye Dışişleri Bakanı İranlı meslektaşıyla telefon temasında “Suriye hükümeti, bu ülkede kaçırılan İranlıları bir an önce bulmak üzere bütün çabalarını harcıyor” dedi.

FHA- Dışişleri Bakanı Ali Ekber Salihi, Suriyeli meslektaşı Velid Muallim’le telefon temasında Şam’da vuku bulan son patlama olaylarından duyduğu üzüntüsünü ve aynı zamanda alçakça yapılan bu tür terör girişimlerini şiddetle kınadığını ifade ederek, Suriye halkı ve hükümeti ve özellikle de bu hadise kurbanlarının yakınlarına başsağlığı dileklerinde bulundu.

Salihi dün akşam gerçekleşen bu telefon görüşmesinde ayrıca, Suriye’de kaçırılan

İranlıların kaderleri konusunda duyduğu endişelerini dile getirdi.

Suriye Dışişleri Bakanı Velid Muallim de bu görüşmede, kendisinin bağlı olduğu hükümetinin taşıdığı sorumluluğu üzerine Suriye’de kaçırılan İranlıları bir an önce bulup serbest bırakma ve kendi ailelerine teslim etme niyetiyle yoğun olarak çaba sarfettiğini vurguladı.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007278874>

- **Velayet-90 deniz tatbikatı başladı**



FHA- Velayet-90 deniz tatbikatı, Deniz Kuvvetleri Komutanı Amiral Habibullah Seyyari’nin “Ya Eba Abdullah” şifresini duyurması ile başladı.

FHA- İran Deniz Kuvvetleri’nin düzenlediği Velayet-90 askeri tatbikatı dün sabah İran’ın güneyinde başladı.

Umman Denizi'nden Hint Okyanusu'na kadar uzanan geniş bir alanı kapsayan tatbikat on gün sürecek.

Velayet 90 askeri tatbikatı coğrafi açıdan Hürmüz Boğazı'nın doğusundan Aden Körfezi'ne kadar uzanan 2 milyon kilometre karelik bir alanı içine alıyor.

Tatbikatta İran Deniz Kuvvetleri'nin en son taktikleri ve askeri teçhizatı kullanılacak.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007278750>

- **Eşref Kampı saldırıya uğradı**

Tahran, 26 Aralık 2011 – Irak Ordusu, Pazartesi 26 Aralık günü Eşref Kampı'na saldırıda bulunduğu ve de saldırıda iki havan topunun kampa isabet ettiğini bildirdi.

Mehr Haber Ajansı'nın 'Fransa Haber Ajansı'ndan aktardığı habere göre, isminin açıklanmasını istemeyen bir Irak Ordusu subayı, "En az iki havan topu, Eşref Kampı'na isabet etti; ne var ki, kampa giriş iznimiz olmaması sebebiyle, meydana gelen hasarın ölçüsü ya da saldırıda

meydana gelen hayat kaybıyla ilgili olarak açıklamada bulunamıyoruz" diye bildirdi.

Söz konusu saldırıya ilişkin ayrıntılar ise, henüz yayınlanmadı.

Saldırı, Halkın Mücahitleri (Münafıkları) Örgütü üyelerinin geçmişte Amerikalı askerlerin emrinde bulunan 'Liberti Üssü'ne transfer edilmesi üzerinde, Irak ve Birleşmiş Milletler arasında anlaşmaya varıldığına ilişkin haberin dün yayınlanmasının ardından düzenlenmiştir.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1493642>

- **İran Dışişleri Bakanı Yardımcısı Moskova'da**

Tahran, 26 Aralık 2011 – İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanı Ortadoğu ve Afrika Yardımcısı Hüseyin Amirabdullahiyan, Rus makamlarla görüşmek üzere Moskova'da bulunuyor.

MHA muhabirinin haberine göre, İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanı Ortadoğu, Arap ve Afrika İşlerinden Sorumlu Yardımcısı Hüseyin Amirabdullahiyan, Rus mevkidaşı ile Ortadoğu Bölgesi ve de Kuzey Afirka'da

yaşanmakta olan değişimlere ilişkin istişarede bulunmak üzere, bugün 26 Aralık günü Moskova'ya seyahat etti.

Hüseyin Amirabdullahiyan geçen hafta ise, bazı bölge ülkelerine seyahatte bulunmuş; bu seyahatlerde çeşitli ülke makamlarıyla görüşerek istişarelerde bulunmuştu.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1493656>

- **İran ve Ermenistan Cumhurbaşkanı, tüm ülkelerin barışçıl nükleer enerji hakkı üzerinde durdular**



İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı Mahmud Ahmedinejad ve Ermeni mevkidaşı, kitle imha silahların yayılmaması üzerinde durarak, tüm ülkelerin barışçıl nükleer enerjiden yararlanma hakkı üzerinde durdular.

İki lider görüştükten sonra yaptıkları ortak bir açıklamada, Orta Doğu ve Kuzey Afrika'daki son gelişmeleri hatırlatarak, bölgede barış, güvenlik ve istikrarın sağlanması üzerinde durdular.

Kitle imha silahlarının yayılmaması gerektiğini vurgulayan liderler, NPT anlaşmasına bağlı kalınması ve başta İslam Cumhuriyeti ve Ermenistan olmak üzere tüm ülkelerin barışçıl nükleer enerjisinden yararlanma hakları üzerinde durdular.

Uluslar arası terörizm ve organize cinayetlere de değinilen açıklamada iki liderin ikili ve çok yönlü iş birliği için hazır olduklarını da ifade ettiler.

Ahmedinejad ve Sarkisyan, 10. karma komisyonu toplantısında elde edilen anlaşmaların takip edilmesini isteyerek iki ülke arasındaki ortak iş birliği komisyonunun önemi üzerinde de vurgu yaptılar.

<http://www2.irna.ir/tr/news/view/line-119/1112247590125445.htm>

- **Iran begins naval drills in Strait of Hormuz**

Tehran's latest display of military power will bring it into close proximity of US warships in strategic oil route.

Iran plans to practice its use of submarines, surface-to-sea missile systems, torpedoes and drones

Iran's navy has started a 10-day drill in international waters near the strategic oil route that passes through the Strait of Hormuz.

The exercises, dubbed "Velayat 90", could bring Iranian ships into proximity with United States Navy vessels in the area. "Velayat" is a Persian word for "supremacy" and it is currently used as a title of deference for the Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The war games cover a 2,000km stretch of sea off the Strait of Hormuz, northern parts of the Indian Ocean and into the Gulf of Aden, near the entrance to the Red Sea, state television reported.

The drill will be Iran's latest show of strength in the face of mounting international criticism over its controversial nuclear programme, which

the West fears is aimed at developing atomic weapons. Tehran denies those charges, insisting the program is for peaceful purposes only.

Adm Habibollah Sayyari, the navy chief, said Iran is holding the drill to show off its prowess and defense capabilities.

"To show off its might, the navy needs to be present in international waters. It's necessary to demonstrate the navy's defense capabilities," state TV quoted Sayyari as saying.

Sayyari said submarines, surface-to-sea missile systems, missile-launching vessels, torpedoes and drones will be employed in the maneuvers.

Strategic waterway

The Strait of Hormuz is of strategic significance as the passageway for about a third of the world's oil tanker traffic. Beyond it lie vast bodies of water, including the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

The US Navy's Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet is also active in the area, as are warships of

several other countries that patrol for pirates there.

Iran regularly holds war games and has also been active in fighting piracy. Both the US and Israel have not ruled out a military option against Iran over its nuclear program.

Iranian hard-liners have come out with occasional threats that Tehran would seal off the key waterway if the US or Israel moved against the country's nuclear facilities.

Iranian authorities have given no indication the strait will be closed during the exercise, and it has not been shut during previous drills.

The US, Britain and Canada announced new measures against Iran's energy and financial sectors last month and the European Union is considering a ban, already in place in the US, on imports of Iranian oil.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/201112256111744890.html>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN

• Iran Defense Minister: Israeli strike would be a suicide mission

Brigadier General Vahidi says 'Zionist regime is completely isolated', threatens deadly strikes from Iran should Israel attack.



Iran's defense minister said Sunday that any Israeli strike on Iran would constitute suicide, the official news agency IRNA reported.

"The Zionist regime is completely isolated and under no circumstances it can attack Iran unless she wants to commit a suicide," IRNA quoted Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi as saying. "It is due to the fact that it will receive deadly strikes from Iran which will make it unstable."

Shahin missile, Iran - AP 9.03.2011

The purported launching of a Shahin missile during war games in Iran.

Photo by: AP

He stressed that Iran is developing its defense capabilities and has made significant progress thus far.

“Iran is in a unique position in all areas, including manufacture of unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, as well as defense and assault airplanes. Iran has also made great progress in electronic warfare technology, aviation industries and missile technology,” IRNA quoted him as saying.

He also said that Iran's capture of the U.S. surveillance drone was a great achievement for Iranian scientists.

On Saturday, Iran's navy started ten days of maneuvers in the Persian Gulf. Naval commander Admiral Amir-Habibollah Sayari said the drill started over an area of 2,000 kilometers, from the Sea of Oman to the east of the Strait of Hormuz.

The armed forces have increased their maneuvers following renewed speculation about possible U.S or Israeli airstrikes against the country's nuclear sites.

Iran has so far denied having any plans to close the Strait of Hormuz, a vital transit route for international oil shipments.

But Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said last week that "if the region faced a war-like situation, then everything would then become war-like."

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/iran-defense-minister-israeli-strike-would-be-a-suicide-mission-1.403679>

- **Israeli MKs to discuss recognizing Turkey's Armenian genocide**

Setting a memorial day for the Armenian genocide would mark a first in Israeli history; consideration stokes criticism that Israel is trying to incite Turkey.

A Knesset committee Monday will consider setting a memorial day for the Armenian genocide, marking a first in Israeli history and stoking criticism that Israel is trying to incite Turkey.

Though a proposal for such a day was submitted in the Knesset eight months ago, action has been delayed until

Monday. The Knesset Education, Culture and Sports Committee, headed by MK Alex Miller (Yisrael Beiteinu), will discuss the issue in the public hearing; Speaker Reuven Rivlin and Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon will take part.

Armenian genocide, Istanbul, French



Turkish nationalists chant slogans as they hold Azerbaijani and Turkish flags during a protest against France in wake of Armenian genocide recognition, Istanbul, Dec. 25, 2011.

Photo by: AFP

Up to now, proposals for recognizing the Armenian genocide have been considered by closed sessions of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. That committee rejected the proposals a number of times.

Recognition of the Armenian genocide is a sensitive diplomatic issue. Last week, the lower house of France's parliament

approved a bill that bans denial of the genocide, which occurred 96 years ago. The law imposes a one-year jail sentence and a 45,000-euro fine.

This step triggered a diplomatic crisis between France and Turkey. Ankara recalled its ambassador, canceled diplomatic, economic and military exchanges with France, and banned the landing of French military planes at its airports and the docking of French ships at its harbors.

"For many years, Israel's government has refused to recognize the genocide for cynical, strategic and economic reasons, connected to its ties with Turkey," said MK Zahava Gal-On (Meretz), who has sponsored the call for recognizing the Armenian genocide. "Now, given the state of relations between the countries, I can't rule out the possibility that the Foreign Ministry is exploiting affairs" and trying to goad Turkey.

Gal-On added that "our moral obligation transcends such cynical calculations, and I hope that the Knesset committee will reach a decision in favor of recognizing the genocide, in the Knesset's first public

hearing on the matter. The education committee is the right place for examining the topic, which is omitted from school curricula."

Miller denies that there is any link between relations with Turkey and the Knesset hearing. He told Haaretz that the discussion "was scheduled long ago, and the date was changed due to the schedule of the Knesset speaker, who wants to be present. There is no connection between this discussion and the Yisrael Beiteinu party This is an educational discussion, and I hope Knesset members won't turn up with the intention of making populist, inflammatory remarks."

Schoolteachers in Israel say there is a guideline banning the teaching of the Armenian genocide. "The official explanation for this ban is that teaching about Armenia would dilute the meaning of the Jewish tragedy in Europe, but it's clear that the real reason involves relations with Turkey," says Michal Vasar, a high school teacher at Sha'ar Henegev.

[http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israeli-mks-to-discuss-](http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israeli-mks-to-discuss-recognizing-turkey-s-armenian-genocide-1.403574)

[recognizing-turkey-s-armenian-genocide-1.403574](http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/israeli-mks-to-discuss-recognizing-turkey-s-armenian-genocide-1.403574)

- **PA negotiator: We may withdraw recognition of Israel**

Palestinians may cancel agreements signed between the PLO and Israel; Abbas paving way for Hamas and Islamic Jihad to take control over entire W. Bank, says Fatah official after Islamist groups agree to join PLO.



Mohammed Shtayyeh, member of the Fatah Central Committee and one of the Palestinian Authority negotiators with Israel, was quoted Sunday as saying that the Palestinians may cancel the agreements signed between the PLO and Israel.

Meanwhile, some PLO and Fatah leaders have privately criticized Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas for

agreeing to incorporate Hamas into the PLO.

At least three senior officials in Ramallah have voiced strong reservations over the decision, a Fatah official told The Jerusalem Post. He said that those who were opposed to the move were worried that Hamas would replace Fatah as the dominant party in the PLO.

One official was quoted as saying that Abbas was paving the way for Hamas and Islamic Jihad to take control not only over the PLO, but the entire West Bank as well.

Shtayyeh's comments were published by the London-based Asharq Al Awsat newspaper.

This was not the first time that a senior PA official had talked about the possibility of abrogating the Oslo Accords.

The comments came less than 48 hours after Hamas and Islamic Jihad agreed to join a temporary leadership of the PLO that would prepare for new elections for the organization's two key bodies - the Palestine National Council and Executive Committee.

In response to a question about Israeli settlements, Shtayyeh said: "If Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu insists that there is no difference between the settlement of Abu Ghneim [Har Homa] and Tel Aviv, we won't distinguish between Ramallah and Jaffa."

With regards to the PLO's decision to recognize Israel in 1993, Shtayyeh explained: "The recognition of Israel was not a balanced recognition. The PLO recognized Israel in the geographic sense, but Israel did not recognize Palestine geographically, but as an institution. Israel only recognized the PLO. Now we are demanding a mutual recognition. We want Israel to recognize the Palestinian territories of 1967."

Shtayyeh said the Palestinians' efforts would from now on focus on internal affairs. "President [Mahmoud] Abbas is now interested in reuniting the Palestinians," he said. "In the year 2012, there will be a political vacuum because the US will be preoccupied with presidential elections, the Europeans with the Euro crisis and the Arabs with their "Spring."

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=250916>

- **FM: Now isn't the time for peace with Palestinians**

Lieberman reiterates position that diplomatic focus should be on maintaining status quo, says Abbas "isn't a partner for anything."

Israel does not need lessons in democracy from Europe, not even Britain, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Sunday, an indication Jerusalem is still stinging over a harsh condemnation of its policies last week by three key European powers.

The four current members of the UN Security Council – Britain, France, Germany and Portugal – publicly censured Israel last week for continuing to build beyond the Green Line, and called on it to bring “price tag” law-breakers to justice.

“We have nothing to apologize for,” Lieberman said during a speech at the Foreign Ministry to the annual meeting of Israel’s heads of embassies and consulates abroad. “Israeli democracy does not have anything to be ashamed of in front of the

European democracies, and not even the glorious British democracy,” he said.



Lieberman, whose ministry last week issued a statement saying that Europe risked losing relevancy if it continued to reflexively condemn Israel and re-interpret various Quartet statements regarding how to restart negotiations with the Palestinians, said in reference to the “price-tag” attacks that Israel did not need advice on how to deal with “wild weeds” breaking the law in Judea and Samaria, or anywhere else in the country.

Lieberman said that the four European countries need to understand that construction in the West Bank was not the obstacle to peace, and that it was the Palestinians who were blocking negotiations.

While Israel proved in its peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt – the latter of which entailed uprooting settlements –

that Jewish communities beyond the Green Line were not obstacles to peace, the Palestinians have proven that for them the settlements are only an excuse not to negotiate, Lieberman said.

He added that when Israel removed all settlements from Gaza, the Palestinian response was missiles and terrorism.

Rather than condemning Israel, Europe should be condemning Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Lieberman said, characterizing Abbas as someone who has shown that “he is not a partner for anything.”

Lieberman said Abbas revealed his true colors last week, when he met in Turkey with Amneh Muna, the Palestinian woman who lured 16- year-old Ofir Rahum to Ramallah, where he was murdered in 2001. Muna was released and deported as part of the swap for Gilad Schalit.

With the Middle East in turmoil now, it is not the time to think that a peace agreement with the Palestinians can be reached any time soon, he said.

“In the midst of an earthquake do you start to lay the foundations for a new building?” he asked rhetorically.

Lieberman reiterated his position that the diplomatic focus now should be on maintaining, rather than solving, the conflict with the Palestinians. One focus of attention should be on building up the Palestinian middle class, he said.

Turning to Iran, Lieberman said that some European countries and leaders seemed to feel that they needed to impose sanctions on Iran more to calm down Israel than to stop the Iranian nuclear march.

The foreign minister said there was no need to calm Israel down, and that its decisions would be made in a reasonable and calculated manner.

But, he said, there was “a need to take courageous decisions immediately, and this is our expectation of the international community.”

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=250869>

- **Israeli FM: Abbas is not peace partner**

Avigdor Lieberman says that turmoil in the Middle East means that an agreement with Palestinians was unlikely.

Avigdor Lieberman, Israeli's foreign minister, has accused the Palestinians of attempting to avoid negotiations, saying that Israeli-Palestinian peace is currently unachievable.

Addressing a meeting of Israeli diplomats in occupied Jerusalem on Sunday, Lieberman said that the current turmoil in the Middle East, meant that an agreement with the Palestinians could not be reached any time soon.

"Do you start to lay the foundations for a new building in the midst of a earthquake?" he asked.

"We have no partner for peace ... Abu Mazen (Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' nom de guerre) proves time after time that he is not a partner for anything."Lieberman said on Sunday.

Conflict management

Repeating views he had expressed in the past, Lieberman said that "the key word in our relations with the Palestinians should be managing the conflict, and not solving it.

"Whoever says it is possible to reach peace with the Palestinians in the coming years is mistaken and misleading (others)," said Lieberman, who has never hidden his blunt scepticism of the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

"This is the situation for the next decade and we need to know how to deal with it in a way that is best for both sides, to facilitate stability, economic and security cooperation, and economic growth among the Palestinians," he said.

He added that no Israeli territorial withdrawal would solve the root issues of the conflict - refugees, Jerusalem and security arrangements.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/2011122603431194759.html>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT / AFRİKA ve MISIR

- **Activist blogger freed in Egypt**

Alaa Abdel Fattah was accused of inciting violence during a demonstration by Coptics in Cairo in October.

A demonstration by Copts in October resulted in the deaths of 25 people in clashes with security forces [EPA]



Egypt's judiciary decided to free blogger and activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, who has spent the past two months in custody, his sister said.

Mona Abdel Fattah announced on Wednesday on Twitter that a court had decided to "free Alaa," who had been remanded in custody on October 30.

The blogger was accused of inciting violence during an October 9

demonstration by Coptic Christians in Cairo.

He also faces charges of vandalism during the demonstration which degenerated into clashes with security forces in which 25 people were killed, most of them Copts protesting over the burning of a church in the southern city of Aswan.

The young man reportedly refused to undergo questioning by the military prosecution on the grounds that the military itself was implicated in the case.

Coptic witnesses said they were fired upon by soldiers during a protest march and that several people were killed when armoured vehicles ran over and crushed them.

The army denies charges of having used excessive force and says three of its soldiers were shot dead, but it has also been criticised for putting civilians on trial in military courts.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/20111225123323396868.html>

- **Islamist parties consolidate Egypt poll gains**

Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi al-Nour party maintain lead as results from second round of polling is announced.

Islamist parties in Egypt have consolidated their gains in Egypt's parliamentary elections, securing more than 65 per cent of the seats determined so far, according to the latest results released.



Abdel-Moez Ibrahim, the country's election commission chief, announced the results from the second round of voting for party lists, in which nine provinces with about 7 million voters cast their ballots, on Saturday,

Based on the announcement, the Muslim Brotherhood says that its Freedom and Justice Party won 86 (47 per cent) of the 180 seats on offer so far.

The al-Nour party, the political arm of Egypt's Salafi movement, has won around 20 per cent of the seats contested so far.

The FJP officially won 36.5 per cent of the current vote for party lists, and al-Nour won 28.78 per cent.

The country's liberal parties fared badly again in the second round, with al-Wafd - the country's oldest party - winning 9.6 per cent of the party list vote and the Egyptian Bloc, the main liberal coalition, taking just seven per cent.

In Egypt's complex electoral system, voters cast ballots for party list candidates who will make up two-thirds of the parliament. They will cast direct votes for individual candidates for the remaining one-third of seats.

Saturday's results are in line with trends from the first round of voting, held in late November, when the two blocs together won nearly 70 per cent of the vote.

The elections were scheduled over three rounds, with run-offs for individual candidates after each round.

The third round of voting is due to be held over two days beginning January 3, followed by another three rounds of voting for the Senate.

The lower house of parliament is due to convene on January 23.

The military, which has faced down days of deadly protests in November and this month, says it will transfer power to civilians after a presidential election is held by the end of June next year.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/20111224144836572326.html>

- **Egypt: Salafist to respect peace agreement with Israel**

Cairo, Asharq Al-Awsat, The Al-Nur Party announced yesterday that it would respect the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement.

In a statement carried by the Egyptian state-run news agency, the Salafist party said it sees it as dangerous to unilaterally cancel an international accord even if it was signed by the former regime.

The party declared that it will respect this agreement and hopes that this stance does not contradict with Egypt's Arab and Islamic duties.

Al-Nur has ranked second to the Muslim Brotherhood in the first two rounds of the Egyptian parliamentary elections.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27835>

- **Sudan says kills Darfur rebel leader - SUNA message**

KHARTOUM (Reuters) - Sudan's armed forces claimed on Sunday to have killed the head of the western Darfur region's most powerful rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement, state media said.

"The armed forces announces the death of Khalil Ibrahim in the area of Wad Banda in North Kordofan state at dawn today," the state news agency SUNA said in a text message sent to mobile phones, without adding details.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27831>

- **Canada concerned forces worse than ousted Mubarak could rise to power in Egypt**

By Al Arabiya with Agencies

Canada is concerned that forces worse than deposed strongman Hosni Mubarak could rise to power in a newly democratic Egypt, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in an interview.



“There are obviously forces who want democracy and progressive change (in Egypt), but there are clearly some forces that would want something that's probably worse than what we had before,” he said in a taped interview with CTV News to be aired Monday.

“So we've always been a little bit hesitant on Egypt,” he said, according to AFP.

Harper was not specific about which forces concerned him.

But liberals have warned about the rise of groups that advocate a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam that could lead to a more conservative and overtly religious new parliament.

Liberals and Islamists have also united to condemn the military's handling of the transition to democracy that lead deadly clashes.

Mubarak is currently facing a murder trial before an Egyptian court and may get the death sentence if found complicit in the killings of some 850 people who died during 18 days of protest that ousted him from power in February.

Harper said he has spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about Israel's security amid the sweeping changes shaping its ally and neighbor.

“I've spoken to Prime Minister Netanyahu and yes, we are concerned,” Harper said.

“The peace between Israel and Egypt for the past several decades has been of immense benefit to both countries and to

the region. And anything that I think threatens that would not be good.”

The Canadian prime minister went on to say that the first free elections in Egypt held this year was a “pretty positive thing.”

“But at the same time, there’s been riots, there’s been persecution of minorities, in particular Coptic Christians and others, and this is a big concern,” he concluded.

Many Egyptians believe the army is no longer fit to manage security on the ground and carry out difficult reforms at a time of political and economic crisis.

On Friday, thousands rallied in Cairo and other cities to demand the army give up power and to vent anger after 17 people were killed in recent protests where troops beat and clubbed women and men even as they lay on the ground, according to Reuters.

Protests continue daily in Tahrir Square. Several hundred protesters have set up camp there. Some are demanding the army bring forward the presidential vote to as early as Jan. 25, the first anniversary

of the uprising that ousted Hosni Mubarak.

Others, worrying that 10 months after Mubarak’s downfall Egypt remains in disarray, protested on Friday to end protests so order can be restored and the economy revitalized.

Analysts say a speedy transfer could play into the hands of military by boosting the chances of presidential candidates with close ties to the army.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/26/184603.html?PHPSESSID=j6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

- **Thousands march in Casablanca for political change**

Several thousand people took to the streets of Casablanca Sunday to press for deeper political reforms, saying recent changes did not go far enough.

The protesters, mobilizing on a call from the so-called Feb. 20 pro-democracy movement, held their first demonstration without the Islamist Justice and Charity group.

The group withdrew from the Feb. 20 movement earlier this month, claiming it had been the object of “attacks” from youths within the movement.



Up to 5,000 people demonstrated in Casablanca’s poor Hay Mohammadi suburb, an AFP journalist witnessed, while police said about 3,500 people in total protested countrywide.

“We are here to say that the fight will continue despite the withdrawal of political organizations, Islamic or otherwise,” protester Hamza Mahfoud told AFP.

“Our demands are legitimate and they have not changed: a parliamentary monarchy and more social justice,” said Mahfoud.

About 300 to 500 people took part in a similar protest in Rabat.

Earlier this month, the Feb. 20 movement said it was willing to talk with the newly elected Islamist head of government under conditions that included the release of political prisoners, a guarantee of press freedom and more individual liberties.

The Islamist Justice and Development Party (PJD) won elections in November which the protest movement boycotted.

Unlike the overthrow of governments in Tunisia and Egypt, Morocco’s king nipped swelling protests in the bud by offering constitutional reforms that curbed his near absolute powers.

For the mostly young protesters who began to march in February giving the movement its name, the reforms were not enough, but the movement has lost some momentum since the elections.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/26/184593.html?PHPSESSID=j6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON / ÜRDÜN

• Hundreds protest near Jordan PM's office

Members of the Islamic Action Front accuse the government of "official terrorism" in Friday's clashes in Mafraq.

Last Modified: 24 Dec 2011 18:35



Members of a Jordanian opposition group calling for change have protested in front of the prime minister's office in the capital Amman.

Hundreds of protesters, mostly from the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political arm of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, on Saturday tried to reach the prime minister's office, but their attempts were prevented by Jordanian security forces.

They were protesting against an incident in the northern city of Mafraq on Friday,

when police had reportedly fired tear gas to break up clashes between Islamist demonstrators and government loyalists.

The IAF, in a statement, said scores of its activists were injured when groups allied to the government attacked participants with stones and sticks.

It alleged that assailants set fire to their headquarters in Mafraq despite the presence of thousands of policemen who failed to protect them.

"The incident proves that the government is unable to protect its citizens who demonstrate peacefully, is not qualified to run the state and incapable of coming up with the required reform," the statement said.

"What happened yesterday is tantamount to official terrorism ... and we hold the government responsible for the bloodshed," it said.

The Islamist opposition, youth groups and other parties have been protesting since January, demanding political and economic change and an end to corruption.

King Abdullah II has already sacked two cabinets over the past several months.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/20111224173534367264.html>

- **Security source denies existence of Al Qaeda cells in Lebanon**

A well informed security reference in Lebanon denied the existence of “Al Qaeda”elements in Lebanon and infiltration of terrorists from Lebanon to Syria . He told Al Sharq Awsat newspaper :

“There are no Al Qaeda cells in Lebanon and no terrorists infiltrated from Lebanon to Syria.”

He told Al Sharq Awsat “if the patient goes to the doctor and does not tell him the facts about his illness, the doctor will not be able to prescribe to him the medication that will cure the disease... this is the case with the inventors of these allegations they know what their illness is but they refuse to take medications to treat it.”

He added if the aim of the fabricated allegations about the infiltration of al-

Qaeda elements from Aرسال to Syria , is to launch an attack against the town , that time is gone forever , and they better think twice before considering such an option.

His comments come after Syrian helicopters on Sunday circled over the outskirts of the Bekaa border town of Aرسال before returning to the Syrian airspace according to a report by Future News TV.

Defense Minister Fayeز Ghosn who is reportedly closely associated with Hezbollah and Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun informed the Lebanese cabinet last Thursday that al-Qaeda members had infiltrated the Bekaa town of Aرسال.

But according to Lebanon’s Interior Minister Marwan Charbel Ghosn only spoke of information he obtained and not of reports that al-Qaeda members had been arrested, especially since the border region is controlled by the Lebanese army.

“I don’t know if this information is a result of the coordination between the Lebanese

and Syrian armies,” Charbel told Asharq al-Awsat newspaper on Sunday.

This development comes after the Syrians blamed Friday’s twin suicide bombing on the al-Qaeda minutes after the incident took place.

March 14 official Fares Soueid commented on the speed by which the Syrians accused al-Qaeda of the bombing.

If they were able to find out within minutes who was behind the twin explosions , why don’t they tell us who killed (Hezbollah commander) Imad Mughniyeh?

Mughniyeh who was assassinated in Damascus on February 12, 2008 in a car bomb was the head of Hezbollah’s security section, a senior intelligence official and one of the founders of the organization.

<http://www.yalibnan.com/2011/12/26/security-source-denies-existence-of-al-qaeda-cells-in-lebanon/>

- **Charbel questions credibility of Ghosn’s reports on al-Qaida**

Lebanon’s Interior Minister Marwan Charbel confirmed during an interview with the Asharq al-Awsat newspaper that Defense Minister Fayez Ghosn had informed the cabinet that al-Qaida members had infiltrated the Bekaa town of Arsal, however Ghosn only spoke of information he obtained and not of reports that al-Qaida members had been arrested, especially since the border region are controlled by the Lebanese army.



“I don’t know if this information is a result of the coordination between the Lebanese and Syrian armies,” he added.

According to observers Ghosn who is strongly allied with Hezbollah and the Free patriotic Movement is colluding with the Syrians in blaming the twin suicide bombing on the al Qaeda. Syria also

blamed the opposition of being the bombings.

During an interview with Al-Rai Kuwaiti newspaper , Free Syrian Army Chief of Staff, Colonel Ahmad Hijazi accused the Syrian regime on Saturday of staging the twin bombings that rocked Damascus on Friday. "They were the work of the Syrian regime in order to blame the opposition of involvement in terrorism, score points in front of international public opinion and portray itself as the victim before the eyes of the Arab observers."

Commenting on whether the unrest in Syria may spill over to Lebanon, Charbel said: "As long as the March 8 and 14 camps remain committed to unity and their country's safety, then the instability in Syria will not spread to Lebanon."

"We should not be affected by the Syrian developments, whether its regime changes or not," he stressed.

Meanwhile the mayor of Arsal Mohammed al-Hujairi criticized the allegations that al-Qaida members had infiltrated the Bekaa town of Arsal and called on the government to deploy the

Lebanese army and security forces in the town in order to confirm that no extremists had entered the country according to a report by the Kuwaiti al-Anbaa newspaper on Sunday.

<http://www.yalibnan.com/2011/12/25/ch-arbel-questions-credibility-of-ghosns-reports-on-al-qaida/>

6. SYRIA / SURİYE

• Syrian activists denounce 'siege' of Homs

Opposition fears government is trying to crush uprising before Arab League observers visit worst-hit areas.

The opposition Syrian National Council has appealed for the Arab League to immediately send observers to the besieged city of Homs and other areas where the Syrian government has used military force to stamp out dissent.

"Since early this morning, the [Homs] neighbourhood of Baba Amr has been under a tight siege and the threat of military invasion by an estimated 4,000 soldiers," the SNC said in a statement.

"This is in addition to the nonstop bombing of Homs that has been going on for days," the council, the main umbrella group of opponents of President Bashar al-Assad, said.

The central city of Homs has been a focal point of the Assad government's crackdown on nine months of anti-government demonstrations, as well as the site of fierce clashes between the army and former soldiers.

Al Jazeera's Zeina Khodr reported from Antakya, a Turkish city near the Syrian border, that intense shelling of Homs had continued throughout Saturday night.

"This is a fresh assault, before the arrival of the Arab League monitors," Khodr said, explaining that Syrian opposition activists believed the government was attempting to crush the rebellion before the delegation visited.

"Activists do not believe monitors will be able to see the situation on the ground," she said.

An advance team of Arab League monitors arrived in Damascus on Thursday to pave

the way for an observer mission to oversee a deal to end the crackdown, which the UN estimates has killed more than 5,000 people since March.

"The Syrian National Council demands that the Arab League observers go to Homs immediately, specifically to the besieged neighbourhoods, to fulfil their stated mission," the council said in its statement.

It continued: "In addition, we demand that the observers go to all the hotspots in Syria, or withdraw and conclude their mission if it is not possible for them to do so. We hold the Arab League and the international community accountable for the massacres and bloodshed committed by the regime in Syria."

Walid Muallem, the Syrian foreign minister, has said he expects the Arab League observers to vindicate his government's contention that the violence in the country is the work of "armed terrorists".

Western governments and rights groups blame the Assad regime for the bloodshed.

Opposition leaders charge that Syria agreed to the mission after weeks of prevarication in a "ploy" to head off a League threat to go to the UN Security Council over the crackdown.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/2011122572730248889.html>

- **Syria: differences within Opposition emerge**

Beirut, Asharq Al-Awsat- In the midst of the intensifying crisis in Syria, activist inside the country are becoming increasingly critical of opposition national council based outside of Syria.

These criticisms have recently risen in light of reported differences within the opposition on certain issues. One such difference is related to the request for international intervention and protection of civilians in the wake of the massacres that took place recently that led to more than 250 killed civilians and military defectors from the regime.

Representatives of the revolutionary councils inside Syria argue that "the actions of the Syrian National Council have not risen to the level of revolutionary activism. The council has so far not demonstrated that it can respond to the demands of the revolutionaries who are facing the killing machine with their bare chests".

In a statement to Asharq Al-Awsat, Abu-Ghazi al-Hamawi, member of the Council of Hamah's Revolutionaries, affirmed that "the revolutionaries fault the national council for being unable so far to unify its vision on how it should act regarding the massacres to which civilians are being subjected in all the regions of Syria. One part of this council calls for the peacefulness of the revolution and another part is calling for international protection and international military intervention".

Al-Hamawi added: "What is amazing is that some members of the opposition (outside the country) continue to insist on the peaceful nature of the revolution although those that are assaulting the unarmed revolutionaries with live gunfire, rockets, and tank projectiles do not have

an iota of honor or human decency. How can anyone talk about a peaceful revolution in the middle of the massacres that are being committed in Homs, Hamah, and Idlib?" He went on to emphasize that "this regime will not fall except through Arab or Turkish or international military intervention. This regime that took power by force will only leave by force. This is particularly true since it does not attach any importance to the revolution and considers its martyrs as terrorists". Abu-Ghazi added: "The national council should make up its mind and unify its stand. If it considers itself as the true representative of the revolutionaries, it should go to the Security Council immediately and request international intervention to protect the civilian population. This regime is criminal; it is resorting to the scorched earth policy. It has no qualms about shelling civilians with tanks and killing women and children. It has even beheaded a sheikh and placed his head on the door of the mosque where he leads worshippers in prayer. This nightmare should end as soon as possible".

Member of the Syrian National Council Umar Idilbi said that he understands the

complaints of the revolutionaries. He pointed out that "when the general body of the national council that consists of no less than 200 members holds a meeting, it can only meet in a hotel". Idilbi affirmed to Asharq Al-Awsat that "the national council bears the political responsibility in total patriotic spirit. It understands the criticism leveled against it and the reasons for this criticism; the internal situation is imposing a lot of pressure".

Idilbi added: "The national council took major steps in the past 24 hours by pressuring the international community and the Arab League and briefing them on the barbaric crimes and mass killings that the Syrian regime perpetrated in Jabal al-Zawiyah. The council also sent messages to the representatives of the 15 member states of the Security Council. The council called on them to expedite the convening of an emergency UNSC session to discuss these massacres and take an urgent decision to confront the serious conditions facing the Syrian people". Idilbi went on to say that "the role of the Syrian National Council is primarily political and to provide relief aid in support of the revolution. This is certainly what the national council is doing".

Umar Idilbi said that the council "invited the Syrian communities in the whole world to stage demonstrations in condemnation of the crimes that the forces of the regime are committing and to launch political, media, and relief aid campaigns in support of the revolutionaries inside the country and to put pressure on the regime".

Answering a question on the resentment of the revolutionaries against the current struggle for power by the opposition outside the country even before the regime falls and even without consulting those that are offering the martyrs, Idilbi replied: "This resentment is justified. It is true that I am one of the members of the national council but I represent the revolutionary activism inside the council. I do not deny that some political sides in the council practiced, unfortunately, some political heresies for some time. The conference that was held in Tunis was marred by some political differences. Eventually, however, everyone rose above the minor matters and regained a high spirit of responsibility. This ensured the success of the conference and the approval of a political program that

responds to all the demands of the revolutionaries without exception". Idilbi affirmed "the coming days will witness the national council's total response to the demands of the revolutionaries after forming its organizational structure". Idilbi announced that he is "one of the revolutionaries" and that he was faithful in conveying their viewpoints to the national council. "For the sake of honesty, the conference in Tunis responded to all the demands outlined in the letters of the revolutionaries," he said.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27834>

- **Arab observers to visit Syria flashpoints Tuesday; opposition urges U.N. to end crisis**

By Al Arabiya with Agencies

A first group of Arab League observers are due in Syria Monday to monitor a deal to end nine months of deadly violence as the opposition urged them to head immediately for the besieged city of Homs.

A source at the mission told Reuters that the team will start its mission in Syria by

visiting the turbulent city of Homs on Tuesday. “It also will visit the capital Damascus, Hama and Idlib on Tuesday,” the source said.

Intensive shelling was reported on Bab Amro in Syria on Monday and as many as 14 people have been killed, Al Arabiya reported citing Syrian activists.

The Arab mission, that consists of around 50 politicians, lawmakers and military officials, is headed by Maj. Gen. Mohammed Mustapha al-Daby. The is scheduled to tour Syrian cities in order to prepare a report, to be referred to the Arab League Secretariat as well as the Syrian government, according to Al Arabiya.

A nine-member advance team of Arab monitors arrived on Thursday to pave the way for the observer mission to oversee the deal aimed at ending the crackdown, which the U.N. estimates has killed more than 5,000 people since March.

Arab League Assistant Secretary General Samir Seif al-Yazal, heading the nine-member advance team, said the first

group of observers would leave for Damascus on Monday.

They will eventually number between 150 and 200.

Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Maqdassy said that the main mission of the Arab team is to “observe” and not to “inspect,” Al Arabiya reported.

The mission is part of an Arab plan endorsed by Syria on Nov. 2 that also calls for the withdrawal of the military from towns and residential districts, a halt to violence against civilians and the release of detainees.

But since signing the agreement, the Assad regime has been accused of pressing on with its crackdown on dissent.

Meanwhile, Tunisian President Moncef al-Marzouqi called on the Syrian opposition to give the chance for President Bashar al-Assad to leave the country peacefully.

In an interview with the London-based Asharq al-Awsat daily, Marzouqi said “they shouldn’t encircle the wounded tiger for the four sides....he should have a

way out. He should be frankly told that he has only one month to leave power peacefully.”

Marzouqi also said that in case of Assad’s departure, he should not be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Barbaric massacre

The opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) called Sunday for the observers to dispatch without fail to Homs and other hot spots of the government’s bloody crackdown on dissent.

“Since early this morning, the (Homs) neighborhood of Baba Amr has been under a tight siege and the threat of military invasion by an estimated 4,000 soldiers,” said the SNC, the main umbrella group of opponents of Assad, according to AFP.

“The Syrian National Council demands that the Arab League observers go to Homs immediately, specifically to the besieged neighborhoods, to fulfill their stated mission,” it added in a statement.

“I call upon the Arab League to ask the Security Council to adopt its plan in order

to increase possibilities of its success and avoid giving the regime an opportunity not to carry out its obligations,” Burhan Ghalioun, the Paris-based leader of the Syrian National Council, said in a televised speech marking Christmas.

The opposition council “holds the international community to its responsibilities and asks them to use all available means to put an end to the tragedies experienced by the Syrian people,” he added, according to The Associated Press.

“The barbaric massacre must stop now,” Ghalioun said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said security forces pounded Baba Amr with mortar and heavy machinegun fire, killing an undetermined number of people and wounding 124 others.

It earlier reported one civilian killed in the city’s Karm al-Zeitun district.

The Observatory said 26 people were arrested and tortured in public in nearby Rastan.

The central city of Homs has been a focal point of the Assad government's crackdown on anti-regime demonstrations, as well as the site of fierce clashes between the army and deserters.

"We demand that the observers go to all the hot spots in Syria, or withdraw and conclude their mission if it is not possible for them to do so," the SNC said.

"We hold the Arab League and the international community accountable for the massacres and bloodshed committed by the regime in Syria," the council added. Armed terrorists

Foreign Minister Walid Muallem has said he expects the Arab League observers to vindicate his government's contention that the violence is the work of "armed terrorists."

Western governments and rights watchdogs blame Assad's regime for the bloodshed.

Opposition leaders charge that Syria agreed to the mission after weeks of prevarication in a "ploy" to head off a

threat by the 22-member league to go to the U.N. Security Council over the crackdown.

Muallem met the advance team of Arab League officials on Saturday, in talks the ministry's spokesman called "positive."

The SNC and human rights activists have charged that the Syrian government was behind twin suicide bomb attacks on Friday that killed 44 people in Damascus.

Assad's regime has blamed the attacks on "terrorist organizations," including al-Qaeda, although it has not said how it reached such a conclusion.

The SNC said "the Syrian regime, alone, bears all the direct responsibility for the two terrorist explosions."

It said the government was trying to create the impression "that it faces danger coming from abroad and not a popular revolution demanding freedom and dignity."

The Observatory demanded the Arab League "immediately head to the town of Hula to document this flagrant violation of

human rights which is just the tip of the iceberg of what is going on in Syria.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/26/184573.html?PHPSESSID=j6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

- **Saldırıların Krizin Çözülmesi Çabalarını Hedefliyor**

Aralık 25, 2011

KAHİRE – Mısır’da yayınlanan Cumhuriyet Gazetesi Genel Editörü Yardımcısı Yazar Muhammed el-Fevval; önceki gün Arap Ligi gözlemci heyetinin ulaşmasıyla birlikte Şam’ı vuran terör saldırılarının, Suriye’de güvenlik ve istikrarı bozma eylemlerini finanse eden dış güçlerin krizin çözülmesi çabalarını başarısızlığa uğratmak istediklerinin bir yansıması olduğunu dile getirdi.

Bugün “Gerçekte ve Uydu Kanallarında Suriye” başlıklı makalesinde iki gün önce Şam’da yaşanan terör saldırıları öncesinde ülke dışında yaşayan Suriyeli unsurların öncülük ettiği provokatör bir medya saldırısı düzenlendiğine işaret eden Fevval; Suriye yönetiminin krizin çözülmesi için Arap Ligi gözlemci heyetiyle işbirliği yapmaya hazır olduğunu açıklamasından

sonra çözüm için harcanan çabaların boşa çıkartılması ve gerçeklerin gün yüzüne çıkmasını önlemek amacıyla dış ajandalara hizmet eden tarafların bu saldırıları düzenlediğini kaydetti.

Şam’ı sarsan iki terör saldırısının Suriye’de yaşanan olaylarda yeni ve tehlikeli bir mecraya sürüklenmesi anlamına geldiğine işaret eden Fevval; bundan sonraki aşamada silahlı terör gruplarının el-Kaide örgütünün kullandığı üsluplara yönelerek daha kanlı eylemler gerçekleştirmesi ihtimaline dikkat çekti.

Birkaç gün önce bir medya grubuyla birlikte Şam’a düzenlenen bir ziyarette bulunduğunu dile getiren Fevval; ziyareti sırasında sokaklarda bir istikrar ve güvenliğin hüküm sürdüğünü gözlemlediğini belirterek görüştükları Suriyeli vatandaşların vatanlarının güçlü halkın da bütün kesimleriyle birlikte yönetimi ve vatani etrafında sınıksız kenetlendiğini vurguladıklarını sözlerine ekledi.

<http://www.sana.sy/tur/237/2011/12/25/390470.htm>

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

• Yemen forces attack 'March for Life'

At least 13 protesters killed when forces loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh open fire on procession.



Yemeni security forces have killed 13 protesters in an attack on a crowd of more than 100,000 protesters peacefully marching into the capital to protest against President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

"Thirteen people were killed and 50 others were wounded by live rounds," a medical official said on Sunday.

The medic from a field hospital in the capital said that 150 other people suffered from breathing difficulties due to tear gas inhalation.

Saleh had earlier said he would go to the United States in order to allow an interim government to prepare for an election to replace him, but did not specify when he would leave.

The protesters had marched for four days and 320km on foot to pressure the government not to give Saleh immunity from prosecution, in the first march of its kind in the impoverished country.

After protesters arrived at the southern entrances to the capital, forces of the elite Republican Guard fired on them with automatic weapons, tear gas and water cannons, sparking hours of clashes.

Saleh travels

Saleh, speaking to reporters after forces loyal to him fired at protesters demanding he face trial for killing demonstrators over 11 months of protests, said he had no designs on staying in power.

"I will go to the United States. Not for treatment, because I'm fine, but to get away from attention, cameras, and allow the unity government to prepare properly for elections," he said on Saturday.

For more on Yemen, visit our Spotlight page

"I'll be there for several days, but I'll return because I won't leave my people and comrades who have been steadfast for 11 months," he said. "I'll withdraw from political work and go into the street as part of the opposition."

"This march is the biggest violation of the Gulf initiative," Saleh told reporters in Sanaa a few hours after the opposition accused his troops of attacking the protesters.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators set off from the southern city of Taiz on Tuesday for the march to the capital.

The demonstrators, part of the "March for Life" rally, arrived in Sanaa in mid-afternoon on Saturday but were blocked in a southern suburb, witnesses said. Around 90 others were wounded, doctors told the Reuters news agency.

Activist Waddad al-Dhalie said that a number of female protesters were also injured with bullets and tear gas.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/12/201112241509927262.html>

- **Protestors demand Yemeni VP's resignation; intelligence chief killed in Aden**

By Al Arabiya with agencies
Sana'a

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated Sunday in Yemen's capital, protesting the deaths of protesters and demanding the resignation of the vice president for failing to bring the killers to justice.



Marching past the office of Vice President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, the protesters denounced him as a "tool in the hands" of outgoing President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

"The people want to bring the slaughterer to trial," shouted the protesters who marched from Change Square, epicenter

of the uprising that began nearly a year ago, towards Sittin Avenue in the northern district of Sana'a.

"We won't rest until the slaughterer is executed," they chanted. "We don't want Abdrabuh, Ali Saleh controls him," they chanted, referring to Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi.

The march took place as Hadi was meeting with U.S. Ambassador Gerald Feierstein. A statement from Hadi's office said they discussed Yemen's crisis, and Hadi appealed for calm.

Hadi is heading a transitional government after Saleh agreed to transfer power following months of demonstrations and turmoil. Under the U.S.-backed plan, Saleh won immunity from prosecution, angering many of his opponents. Yielding to pressure to defuse the country's tensions, Saleh said Saturday he would leave for the United States.

Angry youths have staged defiant protests against the plan, which is backed by the United Nations, despite a bloody backlash by Saleh's forces and loyalists that has seen hundreds of them killed.

But Saleh's General People's Congress party insisted on Sunday that the parliament would confirm the immunity deal.

"Measures will be taken to issue the immunity law as per the Gulf plan" after a parliamentary vote of confidence on the newly formed unity government expected this week, Sultan al-Barakani, who represents the GPC's bloc in parliament, told AFP.

The veteran leader said Saturday that he would soon visit the United States ahead of transferring power following a February 21 presidential election.

A diplomat from one of the countries that has sponsored the deal, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Saleh has presented "a list of 412 people" he wants the immunity deal to include.

The list includes his relatives, aides, and officials who had worked with him during his rule, the source said, adding that Saleh was given a US visa "two weeks ago."

But Sunday's protesters reject any such agreements.

"No guarantee, no immunity to Saleh and to those close to him," they shouted.

Qaeda

The U.S. is concerned about months of turmoil in Yemen that has led to a security breakdown, because the dangerous al-Qaeda branch in Yemen has taken advantage of the vacuum to expand its presence in the south of the country.

Gunmen shot dead an intelligence chief on Sunday in the port of Aden in south Yemen, a police official said, blaming the attack on Qaeda.

The assailants intercepted the vehicle carrying Colonel Hussein Shabibi, head of internal security in the city's Sheikh Othman district, and shot him dead before making good their escape in a car, the official said.

Shabibi was the latest security officer to be targeted in recent months in south Yemen in attacks generally attributed by officials to Qaeda.

The Islamist extremist network has turned 11 months of political turmoil in the capital Sanaa to its advantage, using the popular revolt against President Ali Abdullah Saleh to bolster its presence in south and east Yemen.

Militants linked to Qaeda control several regions and towns including Abyan provincial capital Zinjibar, where they clash regularly with government forces and tribal auxiliaries.

Government forces are also sometimes supported by US drone strikes in their battle against the Partisans of Sharia, the Qaeda-linked insurgent group that took over most of Zinjibar in May.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/25/184545.html?PHPSESSID=j6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

- **Saudi to let foreign carriers fly domestic routes**

Saudi Arabia will soon allow foreign airlines to fly domestic routes, its aviation regulator said on Sunday, opening the market beyond state-owned Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia) and private

National Air Services, which struggled to meet demand.

The General Authority for Civil Aviation said in a statement carried by the state news agency it will let both local and foreign companies apply for licenses to run domestic flights by the end of the Islamic month of Safar, roughly late January.

The decision comes six weeks after King Abdullah split the responsibility for the aviation sector from the Defense Ministry, appointing Prince Fahd bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Saud, a former deputy aviation minister, as head of the newly independent General Authority for Civil Aviation.

The new authority comes directly under the aegis of King Abdullah, which some analysts interpreted as meaning it will have more power to institute reforms.

In April, the advisory Shoura Council recommended that the kingdom study allowing Gulf airline carriers to operate in the Middle East's largest economy.

Saudia and National Air Services, a lower-cost private carrier, now serve a domestic market of around 27 million people, but with a price cap on domestic flights private airlines have struggled with their profit margins.

Last year a third carrier, Sama Airlines, was forced to suspend its operations. By contrast Saudia receives fuel at subsidized prices, allowing it to continue to serve the domestic market despite the ceiling on ticket costs.

Saudia is also moving through a slow process of privatization, which was started in 2006 by splitting the carrier into six units with a view to selling each separately.

Saudi Airlines Cargo has already been partly privatized while the ground handling services unit was merged last year with National Handling Services and Attar Travel Company.

Earlier this year the airline said it hopes to hold a much-delayed initial public offering of its catering service, which is estimated to be worth up to \$540 million.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/25/184474.html?PHPSESSID=j6bck4rqdhogta31munmod5h72>

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

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN / AFGANİSTAN - PAKİSTAN

- **Eleven Killed In Afghan Coal Mine Explosion**

December 24, 2011

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

An explosion at a coal mine in Afghanistan's Baghlan Province late on December 23 left 11 miners dead.

The accident happened in the Chenarak area of the Nehreen district.

Baghlan Governor Munishi Abdul Majeed said the 11 miners were "digging a tunnel unprofessionally" when the explosion happened and all 11 miners in the tunnel were killed.

A crew is at the site digging the bodies out from the collapsed mine shaft.

It was unclear if the mine was approved by the authorities.

- **'Afghan civilians killed for no reason'**

Press TV

December 24, 2011

US-led foreign forces have killed dozens of civilians in Afghanistan without any reasons, a fact-finding team appointed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai has revealed.

Tahir Safi, an advisor to Karzai, told reporters on Saturday that one child, who had climbed a tree on December 13, was among the 21 civilians killed by US-led forces.

"Our delegation found that a child who went up a tree to collect leaves for sheep was killed in the bombing by the NATO chopper without any pre-coordination with the Kandahar administration," Safi said.

"The child's father rushed to the bombing site with other family members as another chopper of the international forces dropped other bombs," he added.

The advisor said the child's father, Abdul Rahim, along with his four relatives, had all died immediately, while his daughter was injured. Three other children from the same village also died.

Three civilians, who were carrying a water-pump on a motorbike, were also killed in another US-led attack in Kandahar on the same day.

In another incident in the northern Kapisa Province, rockets fired by French troops on December 2 killed seven civilians. An investigation had found that neither Taliban militants nor any gunmen had been present in the area when US-led forces struck.

US-led forces in Afghanistan claim that the attacks are targeting Taliban militants, but the bombings mostly kill Afghan civilians.

Civilian casualties caused by US-led foreign forces have triggered deep anger among Afghans, prompting demonstrations throughout Afghanistan.

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

- **U.S. military chief emphasizes "zero tolerance" for bullying in forces**

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23 (Xinhua) -- U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey has emphasized "zero tolerance" for bullying in the armed forces, after eight U.S. soldiers were charged with hazing that led to the death of a fellow Chinese- American soldier in Afghanistan, the American Forces Press Service reported Friday.

Writing in a posting on his Facebook site and Twitter account, Dempsey stressed that bullying and hazing "undermine everything the military stands for," adding that every member of the armed forces has a personal responsibility to uphold its "zero tolerance " standard and should intervene to stop any such occurrences.

"We are currently investigating several allegations of hazing within our ranks," Dempsey said in the posting.

Dempsey posted the message after the U.S. Army charged on Wednesday eight soldiers for being allegedly involved in the death of Army Pvt. Danny Chen, a Chinese-American from the Chinatown in New York.

Chen, deployed to southern Afghanistan in August with the 25th Infantry Division, was found dead on Oct. 3 in a guard tower from "an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound," army investigators said.

"These appear to be isolated instances of misconduct, but I want to be very clear: hazing is simply intolerable," Dempsey said in his message. "It undermines our values, tarnishes our profession and erodes the trust that bonds us."

"Every service member should be aware that participating in hazing or even observing it without reporting it are both wrong. We are duty-bound to protect one another from hazing in any form," Dempsey added.

The death of Chen shocked New York's Asian-American communities, which strongly urged the U.S. military to launch a thorough investigation into the incident.

U.S. military official revealed to Chen's family that he had been subjected to physical abuse and ethnic slurs by his superiors, who dragged him one night out

of bed and across the floor when he failed to turn off a water heater after showering.

This is the second such incident in the past year after the suicide of another Chinese-American soldier Harry Lew, a Marine from California, who killed himself in April in Afghanistan. Investigators found that Lew was subjected to a brutal hazing by his fellow Marines, three of whom were ordered court-martialed in October.

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

- **NATO copter makes emergency landing**

Press TV

December 24, 2011

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has announced that one of its helicopters has made an emergency landing in southern Afghanistan, Press TV reports.

The Western military alliance said in a statement on Saturday that the aircraft touched down in Helmand Province on Friday.

According to the NATO statement, nobody was killed in the incident.

However, Taliban spokesman Yousef Ahmadi claimed that the helicopter was brought down with a rocket-propelled grenade by militants and all the people on board were killed.

In August, a NATO helicopter crashed during a battle with the Taliban in Afghanistan, killing more than 30 US soldiers.

The crash was the deadliest incident of the war for US-led foreign troops since the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan.

In April 2005, another CH-47 Chinook crashed, killing 15 US troops and three civilian contractors. Another Chinook crash in June of the same year killed 17 US troops.

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

- **UK soldier wounded in Afghanistan dies**

Press TV

December 24, 2011

The UK Ministry of Defense has announced that a British soldier died from the wounds he sustained in an explosion in eastern Afghanistan.

The Royal Air Force member was seriously injured in an explosion south of the capital city of Kabul on Thursday.

The injured soldier died from his wounds. The blast also left a Royal Marine dead.

Meanwhile, a NATO helicopter carrying British troops was forced to make an emergency landing after coming under fire on Friday afternoon.

The forced landing took place near an Afghan National Security Force checkpoint in Nahr-e Saraj district, in southern Helmand Province.

Taliban spokesman Yousef Ahmadi claimed that the helicopter was brought down with a rocket-propelled grenade by militants and all the people on board were killed.

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

- **Report: CIA Suspends Drone Attacks in Pakistan**

VOA News
December 24, 2011

A prominent U.S. newspaper says the Central Intelligence Agency has suspended drone strikes targeting low-ranking militants in Pakistan in an effort to mend badly frayed relations with the South Asian nation.

The Los Angeles Times Friday quoted unnamed U.S. officials who say the CIA's "undeclared halt" in attacks is aimed at reversing a "sharp erosion of trust" between the two countries, following a series of deadly incidents, including a NATO attack in November that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

The newspaper says the six-week pause comes amid an "intensifying debate" in U.S. President Barack Obama's administration about the future of the CIA's drone operation in Pakistan. The report says drone strikes have killed dozens of al-Qaida operatives and hundreds of low-ranking fighters since 2004, but they have also infuriated many Pakistanis.

The Los Angeles Times quotes State Department and National Security Council officials who say the airstrikes are "counterproductive," because rank-and-file militants who are killed are easy to replace. The paper says Pakistani claims of civilian casualties, which the United States disputes, have "destabilized" the government of President Asif Ali Zardari, a U.S. ally.

The newspaper says some intelligence officials are urging the CIA to "cut back" its paramilitary role to refocus on espionage. The newspaper says the officials have suggested handing the drone mission over to the Pentagon's Joint Special Operations Command, which flies its own drones and conducts secret counter-terrorism operations in Yemen and Somalia.

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

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



ORSAM

ORTADOĐU STRATEJİK ARAŐTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES
مركز الشرق الأوسط للدراسات الاستراتيجية

STRATEJİK BİLGİ YÖNETİMİ
ÖZGÜR DÜŐÜNCE ÜRETİMİ

STRATEGIC INFORMATION MANAGEMENT
AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT PRODUCTION

publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.

**Bu bülten ORSAM Ortadođu Uzman Yardımcısı Nebahat Tanrıverdi O tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadođu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*