



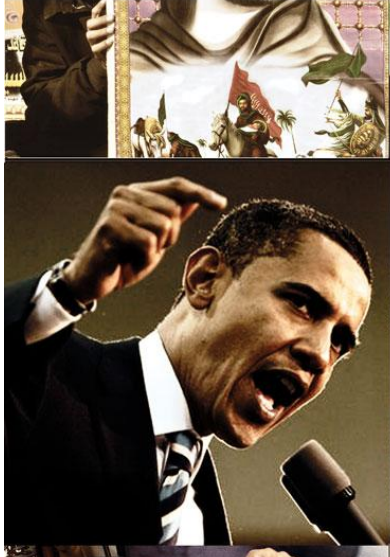
ORSAM
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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1. IRAQ

- **Three options for Mutlag says SLC Representative**

BAGHDAD, Jan. 31 (AKnews) - Iraqiya List has three options when it comes to dealing with Deputy Prime Minister Saleh Mutlag. They should choose one of them instead of asking to reverse his dismissal according to an State of Law Coalition legislator.



Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki sacked his deputy Mutlag after the latter described him as like a "dictator". Yesterday Iraqiya demanded Maliki annul the order.

Speaking to AKnews, Mohammed al-Sayhud of the National Alliance - the largest Shiite alliance in Maliki's SLC - said Mutlag should either submit his resignation, apologize officially for his recorded remarks against the PM or be replaced. If Maliki does not accept the apology Iraqiya should replace Mutlag anyway he added.

Iraqiya is free to choose any of the three options, he added.

Tensions between Iraqiya and SLC escalated after Mutlag was sacked and an arrest warrant was issued for prominent Iraqiya member and Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi. He denies the charges of terrorism leveled against him and has taken refuge in Kurdistan Region where he is unlikely to be arrested, much to the disquiet of SLC members.

<http://aknews.com/en/aknews/4/287350>

- **Talabani meets with US Ambassador Jeffrey to discuss current issues**

1/31/2012 11:21 AM

BAGHDAD / Aswat al-Iraq: Iraq's President Jalal Talabani has received at his Baghdad Office on Monday evening the US Ambassador to Baghdad James Jeffrey, and discussed with him the efforts to settle the current problems and pacify the the circumstances in Iraq, as well as the strengthening of bilateral between Iraq and the United States, according to a Presidential statement on Tuesday.

"Both sides have reaffirmed the continuation of efforts to settle the

current problems and prepare the conditions in Iraq for the success of the National Conference, scheduled to be held in the near future among the different political forces in Iraq," the statement stressed.

The US Ambassador, the statement pointed out, "had highly assessed the efforts exerted by President Talabani to unite all Iraqis, expressing hope that this role would bring the political parties closer, in accordance with the Iraqi Constitution, in such a way that serves the political process in Iraq".

The statement said that both President Talabani and Ambassador Jeffrey have expressed appreciation for the return of al-Iraqiya Bloc to attend the Parliament sessions, considering the decision as "a positive step".

It confirmed that Ambassador Jeffrey had presented a "letter of congratulations from President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle and other members of his family to President Talabani and his respectful family".

[http://en.aswataliraq.info/\(S\(fpan2lnwd5zpmb45qmsljlio\)\)/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=146720&l=1](http://en.aswataliraq.info/(S(fpan2lnwd5zpmb45qmsljlio))/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=146720&l=1)

- **Pentagon prepares for new military talks with Iraq (AP, January 30)**

Washington – The Obama administration is preparing to begin talks with Iraq on defining a long-term defense relationship that may include expanded U.S. training help, according to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's chief policy aide.

Michele Flournoy, who is leaving her Pentagon post on Friday to return to private life, said in an interview with a small group of reporters that the administration is open to Iraqi suggestions about the scope and depth of defense ties.

"One of the things we're looking forward to doing is sitting down with the Iraqis in the coming month or two to start thinking about how they want to work with" the U.S. military to develop a program of exercises, training and other forms of security cooperation, Flournoy said.

The U.S. military completed its withdrawal from Iraq in December after nearly nine

years of war. Both sides had considered keeping at least several thousand U.S. troops there to provide comprehensive field training for Iraqi security forces, but they failed to strike a deal before the expiration of a 2008 agreement that required all American troops to leave.

As a result, training is limited to a group of American service members and contractors in Baghdad who will help Iraqis learn to operate newly acquired weapons systems. They are part of the Office of Security Cooperation, based in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and headed by Army Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen.

Additional and more comprehensive training is a major issue because Iraq's army and police are mainly equipped and trained to counter an internal insurgency, rather than deter and defend against external threats. Iraq, for example, currently cannot defend its own air sovereignty. It is buying — but has not yet received — U.S.-made F-16 fighter jets.

In a new report on conditions in Iraq, a U.S. government watchdog agency said the Iraqi army is giving so much attention to fighting the insurgents that it has had

too little time to train for conventional combat.

"The Iraqi army, while capable of conducting counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations, possesses limited ability to defend the nation against foreign threats," said the report submitted to Congress Monday by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, Stuart W. Bowen, Jr.

In an introductory note, Bowen wrote that while Iraq's young democracy is buoyed by increasing oil production, it "remains imperiled by roiling ethno-sectarian tensions and their consequent security threats."

Iraq has seen an upswing in violence since the last U.S. troop left, but senior U.S. officials have remained in touch in hopes of nudging the Iraqis toward a political accommodation that can avert a slide into civil war.

Vice President Joe Biden spoke by phone on Saturday with Osama Nujaifi, speaker of the Council of Representatives. And Biden spoke on Friday with a key opposition figure, Ayad Allawi, a former

interim prime minister and a secular Shiite leader of the Iraqiya political bloc. Allawi has said Iraq needs to replace its prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, or hold new elections to prevent the country from fracturing along sectarian lines.

In a positive sign, Iraq's Sunni leaders announced on Sunday that they will end their boycott of parliament. That may have paved the way for the political leadership to hold a national conference led by President Jalal Talabani to seek reconciliation and to end a sectarian political crisis.

George Little, the Pentagon press secretary, said Sunday that Panetta remains optimistic about the outlook in Iraq despite worsening violence.

"The secretary believes that the Iraqi people have a genuine opportunity to create a future of greater security for themselves, and that senseless acts of violence will not deter them from pursuing that goal," Little said. "The United States remains committed to a strong security relationship with Iraq."

U.S. officials have said they aim to establish broad defense ties to Iraq, similar to American relationships with other nations in the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

Flournoy, 51, is stepping down from her position as undersecretary of defense for policy on Friday after three years in the job. She is the first woman to hold that post. Her chief deputy, Jim Miller, has been picked to succeed her.

In the interview last week, Flournoy reiterated that she is leaving government to focus more on her family. She and her husband, W. Scott Gould, have three children aged 14, 12 and nine.

She came to the Pentagon in February 2009 from the Center for a New American Security, where she was the think tank's first president. She had served in the Pentagon in the 1990s as a strategist.

Flournoy said in an Associated Press interview in December when she announced her decision to quit that she intends to play an informal role this year in supporting President Barack Obama's

re-election effort. She was a member of his transition team after the November 2008 election.

- **Iraqi vice president predicts return to sectarian violence CNN, Mohammed Tawfeeq and Frederik Pleitgen, January 31)**

Irbil - Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi has lashed out at Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, predicting that Iraq could soon return to widespread sectarian violence that could require the return of U.S. forces.

"Al-Maliki is pushing my country to reach a turning point with deeply sectarian dimension," the Sunni vice president told CNN on Sunday during an interview in the semiautonomous Kurdish region in the north, where he has fled so that government forces loyal to the Shiite prime minister cannot execute an arrest warrant for him on charges of running a death squad.

He expressed concern that Americans "will face the same problem as they faced in 2003," when a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq, toppling the regime of Saddam

Hussein and unleashing a wave of sectarian violence.

And he said he did not understand how U.S. President Barack Obama is able to characterize Iraq as a free, stable and democratic country.

"What sort of Iraq we are talking about?" he asked. "How the Americans will feel proud? How the American administration is going to justify to the taxpayer the billion of dollars that has been spent and at the end of the day the American saying, 'Sorry, we have no leverage even to put things in order in Iraq?'"

Though Iraq's instability may not affect this year's election campaign in the United States, "it is going to affect the American interest in the region, and they should be very much concern about that," al-Hashimi said. "The future of Iraq is grim."

The arrest warrant for al-Hashimi was issued last year, days after the Sunni majority bloc Iraqiya suspended its participation in Parliament amid that claims it was being cut out of the political process. The bloc ended that boycott on Sunday as a "gesture of goodwill." But a

separate boycott of the Cabinet remains in place.

Al-Hashimi denied the charges against him as politically motivated. He accused al-Maliki of having "put my home and my office under siege" during the three months before he fled to the Dokan resort about 400 km (250 miles) north of Baghdad.

"I kept patient on that, hoping that al-Maliki is going to behave sensibly sometime, and things aggravated," al-Hashimi said.

Asked whether al-Maliki is becoming a dictator, al-Hashimi was blunt: "What sort of explanation could I give for a real and serious power consolidation?" he asked. "What could the average Iraqi people or the American citizen ... say for the prime minister to be chief in command, the minister of defense, the minister of interior and the chief of the national security?"

The charges appear to have been based on the confessions of three security guards for al-Hashimi. Iraqi state-run TV has aired video of the men's confessions.

CNN cannot independently verify their identities.

An official in al-Hashimi's office, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of security concerns, has said the men may have confessed under duress.

In one confession, a man detailed roadside bombings and shootings that targeted government and security officials in 2009. He said orders at times came directly from al-Hashimi and at times through his son-in-law, Ahmed Qahtan, who is a senior member of his staff.

The man alleged that the vice president thanked him after a number of attacks.

The man in the video said al-Hashimi ordered him to map out security locations and checkpoints for the Baghdad Brigade, which protects the Green Zone. He said he was speaking out to "clear his conscience" and "expose this criminal."

Since October, Iraqi security forces have rounded up hundreds of people accused of being members of Saddam Hussein's outlawed Baath Party or terrorists. The Sunni-backed Iraqiya coalition says most

of them belong to its political bloc and that the prime minister is simply taking out his opponents.

The political turmoil in Iraq has raised concerns in Washington, with officials saying they are monitoring the reports about the arrest warrant.

"We are talking to all of the parties. We've expressed our concern regarding these developments. We're urging all political sides in Iraq to work out their differences peaceably, politically, through dialogue, and certainly in a manner that is consistent with democratic political processes and international standards of rule of law," Victoria Nuland, a spokeswoman for the State Department, said in December.

- **FACTBOX-Security developments in Iraq (Reuters, January 30)**

* WAJIHIYA - A bomb planted in front of a police official's house exploded, wounding a member of his family, in the town of Wajihya, about 30 km (20 miles) east of Baghdad, a source in the Baquba security operations centre said.

* BAQUBA - A bomb blast damaged the house of a court official in central Baquba, 65 km (40 miles) northeast of Baghdad, but no one was hurt, a source in the Baquba security operations centre said.

BAQUBA - A roadside bomb went off near a police patrol in central Baquba, killing one policeman and wounding three others, a source in the Baquba security operations centre said.

BAQUBA - A suicide bomber detonated a car bomb at a police checkpoint, killing three policemen and wounding three other people, including a civilian, in central Baquba, a source in the Baquba security operations centre said.

MOSUL - Gunmen killed a policeman and his father in a drive-by shooting in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

MOSUL - Gunmen shot dead a government worker near his house in western Mosul, police said.

MOSUL - A militant was killed and a soldier was wounded when the army

clashed with gunmen in western Mosul, police said.

RABIA - A soldier was wounded and a smuggler was killed when Iraqi border forces clashed with a group of smugglers near the Syrian border in the town of Rabia, northwest of Mosul, police said.

BAQUBA - A roadside bomb went off near an army convoy and wounded one soldier in southern Baquba, a source in the Baquba security operations centre said.

BASRA - A police officer was killed and another wounded when a suspected militant threw a hand grenade during a raid on his house in central Basra, 420 km (260 miles) southeast of Baghdad, said Ali Ghanim al-Maliki, the head of the Basra provincial council security committee. The suspect was killed.

- **U.S. uses drones to protect envoys; Iraq said outraged**

The U.S. State Department said on Monday it has used unarmed drones to help protect its diplomats overseas and the New York Times reported that the program had outraged senior Iraqi officials.



The department's spokeswoman, Victoria Nuland, said its Bureau of Diplomatic Security had a program to use small aircraft known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to take pictures of U.S. facilities and personnel abroad.

At her daily briefing, Nuland declined to say where the drones had been deployed or whether they were still in use. An annual report for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security said they had been successfully tested in Iraq.

The New York Times, which first reported the program, said the State Department began operating some drones in Iraq last year on a trial basis and stepped up their use after the last American troops left Iraq in December.

The newspaper quoted a senior U.S. official as saying talks were under way to obtain authorization for the current drone operations in Iraq.

However the newspaper reported that three senior Iraqi officials -- a top adviser to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, Iraq's national security adviser, and the acting minister of interior -- said in interviews they had not been consulted.

Nuland repeatedly declined to address whether the U.S. government had obtained Iraqi permission to fly the drones, saying only that it always closely consulted with foreign governments about steps to protect U.S. diplomats.

"We do have an unmanned aerial vehicle program used by the State Department. These are tiny little things. They are not armed. They are not capable of being armed," she said.

"What they are designed to do is help give us pictures over our facilities to help in their protection," she said, adding that the program was limited in scope and would only be employed in "critical threat environments."

Asked how large the drones were, Nuland held her hands about 2 feet (0.6 meters) apart. A photograph in the Bureau of

Diplomatic Security annual report showed a man holding one that appeared to be 4 or 5 feet (1.2 or 1.5 meters) long.

In addition to flying over facilities such as embassies, the drones can be used to track the routes and movements of U.S. diplomats as they travel within a country.

The New York Times posted a link to a U.S. government solicitation for firms to bid "to provide worldwide Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) support services" for up to five years.

"The mission of the UAV program is to provide real-time air surveillance of fixed installations, proposed movement routes and movement operations, and special events thereby improving security in high threat ... environments," it said.

The Iraqi embassy in Washington was not immediately available for comment. Telephone calls to its media office, ambassador's office and receptionist went unanswered.

Asked if the Iraqi government had complained about the program, Nuland

replied: “I don’t have any information to that effect at the moment.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/31/191635.html?PHPSESSID=mjitgn9oane3l8v7qk535obak1>

2. IRAN

• Iran unveils smart laser-guided projectile

TEHRAN, Jan. 30 (MNA) – Iran’s Defense Industries Organization unveiled a domestically manufactured smart laser-guided projectile, named the Basir (discerning), during a ceremony held on Monday ahead of the Ten-Day Dawn celebrations (February 1-11) marking the anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

“This ammunition is guided by laser and has been designed and manufactured by Defense Industries Organization’s capable and competent experts for the first time in the country,” Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said during the ceremony.

“This smart ammunition is capable of hitting and destroying bridges, tanks, military equipment, command posts, and moving targets,” he explained.

“The built-in laser system of this ammunition can track, identify, locate, and determine the distance of intended targets,” he said.

Brigadier General Vahidi added that the ammunition can also be used in the battles which take place in mountainous areas and can destroy heavily fortified bunkers and the enemy’s defense systems.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he said that the Defense Ministry has a strategic plan to upgrade, indigenize, and modernize the military equipment that are in possession of the armed forces and design and produce modern weapon systems required to defend the country.

In addition, the defense minister said that Iran is currently the world’s fifth-leading producer of smart weapons.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1521105>

• No country has right to ask Iran to halt enrichment: Salehi

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, Jan. 30 (MNA) – Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has said that no one has the right to ask Iran to

halt the uranium enrichment component of its nuclear program.

Salehi made the remarks at a news conference on Sunday on the sidelines of an African Union summit in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa when asked whether or not Iran would halt its nuclear enrichment activities if the West offers incentives.

“We have the legal right to uranium enrichment, and we pursue it according to the NPT (nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). No one has the right to ask us to halt uranium enrichment,” Salehi stated.

Asked if the visit by International Atomic Energy Agency delegation that arrived in Tehran on Sunday sends a message to the West, Salehi said, “Iran has always fulfilled its commitments to the NPT, and we have nothing to hide. Iran has already answered the agency’s questions.”

Syria must be given enough time to implement reforms

In reply to a question about Tehran’s stance toward the developments occurring in Syria, the Iranian foreign

minister said, “Our stance in this regard is completely transparent and clear, and we have always mentioned it. (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad has promised to hold a referendum on the constitution” and to allow different political parties to carry out their activities in the country freely.

“However, the question is why certain countries are trying to prevent the implementation of the reforms and do not give them (the Syrian officials) enough time,” he added.

Salehi also said, “We should give Syria time to carry out reforms by itself. If an unexpected incident takes place in Syria, no one can predict its repercussions. Such an incident may create conflicts among the people. We should give the Syrian people and government time to implement the reforms themselves.”

Iran is not Iraq

Asked whether or not Iran is concerned that it may experience the same fate as Iraq, he stated, “Iran is a powerful country and is very different from Iraq. Other sides are aware of this issue. If they had been

able to (attack Iran), they would have already done so.”

Iran oil embargo not a great problem

The foreign minister also answered a question about Iran’s plans to deal with the recent sanctions on its oil industry, saying that the Islamic Republic has many customers for its oil and the oil embargo is not a “great problem” for the country.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1520809>

- **Deputy Head of AEOI to Represent Iran in Nuclear Power Asia 2012 Conference**

TEHRAN (FNA)- Deputy Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Nasser Rastkhah is due to represent Tehran in the Nuclear Power Asia 2012 Conference in Malaysia.



A large number of nuclear experts from various world countries are taking part in the Nuclear Power Asia 2012.

Representatives from the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) are attending the two-day conference.

Iran is to share its nuclear experiences with the participating countries. Rastkhah is also scheduled to address the audience in the second day of the conference.

The Nuclear Power Asia started work three years ago with the objective of developing nuclear energy in new economies in East Asian states including Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

The participating states will review their latest achievements in the field of peaceful nuclear energy and construction of nuclear power plants.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9010173087>

- **U.S. lawmakers take next step on new Iran sanctions on heels of European embargoes**

Lawmakers on the U.S. Senate Banking Committee plan to vote on a new round of sanctions targeting Iran’s energy sector, aimed at choking off funds they suspect Tehran uses to develop nuclear weapons.



The committee released details of its 61-page bipartisan bill late on Monday and lawmakers will consider the measures and vote on them at a hearing on Thursday.

“Iran’s continuing defiance of its international legal obligations and refusal to come clean on its nuclear program underscore the need to further isolate Iran and its leaders,” said Tim Johnson, the Democratic chairman of the committee.

The package comes on the heels of tough new embargoes by European nations and new banking sanctions that President Barack Obama’s administration is beginning to implement -- a package signed into law on Dec. 31.

But Johnson and Richard Shelby, the senior Republican on the committee, said existing sanctions and embargoes have not done enough to force Iran to stop its work on building a nuclear bomb. Iran

says its nuclear program is for civilian use only.

The House of Representatives has already passed companion legislation in mid-December with many similar provisions.

The draft legislation would require the administration to identify officials, affiliates and agents of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps within 90 days, and designate them for sanctions.

The proposed bill would target companies that do business with the IRGC, which would be “consequential” for the energy sector, said Mark Dubowitz, executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

The language could give the United States the legal authority to sanction foreign companies that buy oil from the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) or have it shipped by the National Iranian Tanker Company (NITC), Dubowitz said in an interview, according to Reuters.

“They don’t specifically name them, although the current language in the bill would cover them,” he said, noting that

there could be amendments that would more specifically target the NIOC and NITC as priorities for investigation and sanctions.

Dubowitz said he also hopes to see amendments to the bill that would require oil companies to certify that refined products such as gasoline shipped to the United States do not contain any Iranian crude oil.

The proposed bill would penalize U.S. companies whose foreign subsidiaries do business with Iran as well as uranium mining joint ventures with Tehran in other parts of the world.

Also sanctioned would be companies involved in new energy-related joint ventures with Iran in other countries -- language that would exempt the Shah Deniz natural gas project in Azerbaijan from sanctions.

The NIOC's subsidiary, Naftiran Intertrade Co, owns a 10 percent stake in the Shah Deniz project which is co-led by BP PLC and Norway's Statoil. The House version of the sanctions bill explicitly excluded the project from sanctions.

The draft bill would require companies traded on U.S. stock exchanges to disclose any activity in Iran to the Securities and Exchange Commission, which could prompt further sanctions.

The bill also would sanction companies that supply Iran with equipment -- including telecommunications equipment -- used to commit human rights abuses. Similar sanctions proposed by Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer against companies selling equipment used in human rights abuses in Syria were not included in the draft bill.

The new sanctions would target shippers, insurers and reinsurers that knowingly help Iran obtain materials that could be used to develop weapons of mass destruction, and increases U.S. firms' liability for the actions of their foreign subsidiaries if they violate U.S. sanctions law regarding Iran, according to AFP.

The bill would also require all firms with stock traded on U.S. exchanges to disclose whether they or their affiliates have engaged in activities that could fall afoul of U.S. sanctions targeting Tehran,

including energy investments, or the sale of communications monitoring or surveillance technology.

And it aims to deny U.S. visas to Iranian students who aim to come to study energy-related fields in U.S. institutions if the U.S. State Department finds they plan to return to work in Iran's energy sector or on Tehran's nuclear program.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/31/191608.html?PHPSESSID=mjitgn9oane3l8v7qk535obak1>

3. SYRIA

- **Foreign Ministry Regrets the US-Western Hostile Statements against Syria**

DAMASCUS, (SANA)-An official source at the Foreign and Expatriates Ministry stated that the US-Western hostile statements are mounting against Syria in a flagrant way, adding "no one can link them to the current reform process in the country whom the US and its allies alleged they adhere to."



"Those mounting statements are parallel to the hard strikes which the armed terrorist groups receive since three days , particularly today," the source said on Monday.

"Those statements are also synchronized with the coming session of the UN Security Council on Tuesday that the US and its followers rely on in order to target Syria and create a different image about the situation of the Syrian crisis, particularly after the campaign of suspicion and the negative media pumping which some Arabs directed against the mission of the Arab League monitors," the source added.

It said "We won't be astonished at the absence of wisdom and reasonability of those statements... we regret that those statements are still coming from countries accustomed to making the Middle East a field for their foolishness and failing experiments."

The source underlined that Syria, who defend itself against terrorism, will be the exception that has defeated and will defeat the policies of chaos adopted by those countries.

<http://sana.sy/eng/21/2012/01/31/397550.htm>

- **Gatilov: Arab-Western Draft Resolution Unacceptable**

MOSCOW, (SANA) – Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Gennady Gatilov, said on Monday that the draft resolution submitted by the Arab League and the Western countries to the UN Security Council on Syria is unacceptable in its current form for Russia.



In a press statement, Gatilov said that Russia and China voted last October against a draft resolution submitted by the Western countries to the Security Council because it included unacceptable items, adding that the current western draft

resolution is not different from the previous one.

Gatilov clarified that the draft resolution submitted to the Security Council by the Western countries cannot form the ground to reach common denominators at the security Council on the Syrian issue, adding that it is a biased document that sparks debates and leaves the door open for interference in the Syrian affairs.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov stressed that Russia wants the UN Security Council members to study in detail the report of the Arab League (AL) Observer Mission on Syria before discussing the draft resolution presented by the AL to the Council.

He underlined that his country doesn't want to trade with the west or any other side about taking a resolution on Syria, saying "we don't trade, but we seek the others to take into consideration our stance and viewpoint."

"We assert that our basic principles would be reflected in any resolution about Syria.. which means rejecting violence from any side, bringing the government and

opposition into serious dialogue away from any foreign intervention," Gatilov said.

He added that the danger of intervention exceeds the Syrian frame and "we wouldn't accept the Libyan Scenario, which is linked to a big violation, to be a base to resolve conflicts."

Gatilov underlined that any international sanctions on Syria wouldn't be effective because the UN Security Council didn't impose any sanctions in this regard, rejecting the unilateral sanctions imposed by some countries on Syria.

Fomin: Russian Leadership's Rejection of Foreign Interference in Syria's Affairs Reflects Attitude of Majority of Russians
Co-Chairman of the Russian Committee for Solidarity with the Syrian People Oleg Fomin affirmed that Russia supports the Syrian leadership and the majority of the Syrian people through its rejection of the brazen allegations of Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

In an interview with SANA's correspondent in Moscow, Fomin said that the Qatar-Saudi stances elicit sarcasm

since both of these countries' policies lack any modicum of democratic principles.

He pointed out that aggressive actions against Syria cause great consternation to Russia, stressing that Russia's stance which calls for preventing foreign interference in Syria's affairs and holding national dialogue among Syrians reflects the attitude of the greater majority of Russians.

Fomin affirmed that the refusal of the opposition and those supporting it in the west and Arab world to engage in dialogue show that they only want to achieve their own ends.

He said that the head of the Arab observer mission Lt. Gen. Mohammad al-Dabi painted an objective picture of what is happening in Syria, and that Syria adhered to the protocol signed with the Arab League.

Fomin criticized Saudi Arabia and Qatar for withdrawing their observers, saying that these countries' pressure to stop the mission aims to prevent the world from knowing what is actually happening in

Syria and seeks to internationalize the issue.

<http://sana.sy/eng/22/2012/01/31/397441.htm>

- **Syrian Kurds want referendum after eventual fall of regime**

PNA-Erbil, Syrian Kurdish party leaders said they want a referendum after an eventual fall of embattled President Bashar Al Assad to decide on their people's future as part of Syria.



More than 200 Syrian Kurds from 25 countries are taking part in a two-day conference in the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital of Erbil.

"In Syria, we will not obtain the same thing as the Iraqi Kurds because the circumstances are different," said Hamid Darwish, head of the Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party of Syria.

"We want our national rights to be written into the constitution and approved by our Arab brothers," he said.

Abdul Hakim Bashar, who leads the Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria, said his people had "the right to self-determination within the framework of the unity of Syria and based on the principle of decentralisation."

Kurds account for about nine per cent of Syria's population. They have several rival parties, all of which are officially banned, seeking political and administrative rights for their community.

They have supported the anti-regime protests that broke out in mid-March and have claimed thousands of lives as Syrian authorities crack down on dissent and battle army deserters.

Kurdistan President Masoud Barzani said that "We do not want to interfere in the affairs of Kurds in Syria, but we will help and support your

decisions,".He added; "But on condition that you remain united during this sensitive period, and that you avoid internal conflicts." He continued: "The situation is important to us because it (Syria) is a neighbouring country, we have a long border with it, and more than two million Kurds live there."

<http://peyamner.com/English/PNAnews.aspx?ID=264798>

- **'Syria will foil Western efforts to sow chaos'**

By REUTERS01/31/2012 03:22

Forces retake Damascus suburbs as Syria dismisses Western claim Assad has lost control, will inevitably fall from power.

AMMAN/UNITED NATIONS - Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces have taken the upper hand in escalating battles on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, while top Western and Arab diplomats are seeking a UN Security Council resolution calling for him to go.

Rebels who seized suburbs of Damascus were driven out after three days of

fighting that activists say killed at least 100 people.

Activist organizations said 25 people were killed on Monday in Damascus suburbs and dozens more died in other parts of the country, mostly in raids in Homs and the surrounding countryside.

Events on the ground are difficult to confirm, as the Syrian government restricts most access by journalists.

Syria dismissed on Monday US and Western criticism of Damascus and said it would defeat what it called foreign attempts to spread chaos, hours after the White House said President Bashar Assad had lost control and would inevitably fall from power.

"We are not surprised at the lack of wisdom or rationality of these statements and regret that they are still issued by countries that are used to making the Middle East an arena for their follies and failures," the state news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry source as saying late on Monday.

"Syria, which is defending itself today against terrorism and will continue to do so, will be the exception which ... will foil the policies of chaos adopted by these countries," it said.

The Arab League wants the Security Council to pass a resolution backing an Arab peace plan that calls on Assad to relinquish power to his deputy and prepare for elections.

Its Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby and the prime minister of Qatar will make the case at the world body on Tuesday.

The Arab delegation will be supported in person by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, British Foreign Secretary William Hague and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe as the West presents a united front. The resolution's fate depends on whether the Arabs and their Western backers can persuade Russia not to veto it.

<http://www.ipost.com/VideoArticles/Video/Article.aspx?id=255821>

- **US says Assad's fall 'inevitable'**

White House says Syria's leadership has lost control of the country, as Western and Arab nations push for UN resolution.

The US has said the rule of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is coming to an end, as Western and Arab nations push for a UN Security Council resolution.

Washington is seeking to convince Russia not to stand in the way of the Arab League's initiative, to be presented to the Security Council in New York on Tuesday, calling for Assad to transfer power to help resolve the crisis.

"Assad's fall is inevitable," Jim Carney, the White House spokesman, said on Monday.

"As governments make decisions about where they stand on this issue and what steps need to be taken with regards to brutality of Assad's regime, it's important to calculate into your consideration the fact that he will go. The regime has lost control of the country and he will eventually fall."

Damascus dismissed Western criticism and said it would defeat what it called foreign attempts to spread chaos.

"We are not surprised at the lack of wisdom or rationality of these statements and regret that they are still issued by countries that are used to making the Middle East an arena for their follies and failures," the state news agency quoted a foreign ministry source as saying.

"Syria, which is defending itself today against terrorism and will continue to do so, will be the exception which ... will foil the policies of chaos adopted by these countries," it said.

Violence escalating

The comments came as fighting seemed to escalate on the ground in Syria, where activists said about 100 people were killed on Monday.

Troops battled anti-Assad fighters in the central city of Homs and in suburbs of the capital, Damascus.

The Local Co-ordination Committees said the majority of the victims died in Homs province, many of them in the town of

Rastan, where the army shelled residential buildings.

Rastan has long been the scene of battles between armed opposition and government forces.

At the edges of Damascus, fighting subsided by nightfall on Monday as members of the anti-Assad Free Syrian Army (FSA) pulled out to the edges of the capital's suburbs, activists said.

Several civilians and six FSA members were reportedly killed.

State television said government forces had carried out operations to restore security upon a request from citizens.

Meanwhile, Nabil Elaraby, the secretary-general of the Arab League, and Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, the Qatari prime minister, held talks with diplomats in New York ahead of Tuesday's Security Council meeting on Syria.

A new draft resolution calls for a "political transition" in Syria. While it does not seek military action or UN sanctions against Syria, it does say that the Security Council

could "adopt further measures" if Damascus does not comply with the terms of the resolution.

Russia, which along with China vetoed a previous draft in October, has not explicitly threatened to veto the resolution, but has said the draft is unacceptable in its present form.

'Diplomatic muscles flexed'

Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, said she would travel to the UN for the meeting to "send a clear message of support to the Syrian people: We stand with you".

France, the UK, and Portugal are sending their foreign ministers to take part in the meeting.

A vote on the resolution, drafted by European and Arab members of the council, could come before the end of the week, diplomats say.

Al Jazeera's Kristen Saloomey, reporting from the United Nations in New York, said that French diplomats were claiming that the resolution now had a majority of votes in the Security Council.

"All diplomatic muscles are being flexed here in New York in an attempt to win support for a resolution that is put forward by Morocco in the Security Council... But it comes down to China and Russia who have both expressed concern over the resolution."

As permanent members, both Russia and China have veto powers at the Security Council, so any binding resolution would require Moscow and Beijing to at least abstain from voting.

Earlier, Russia suggested to the government and the opposition that they should meet in the Russian capital for "informal contacts" without any preconditions.

Russia said Assad's government had agreed to talks, but a major opposition body rejected the offer.

"The resignation of Assad is the condition for any negotiation on the transition to a democratic government in Syria," Burhan Ghalioun, head of the opposition Syrian National Council, told the AFP news agency.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/201213144956880720.html>

- **Syrian Kurds divided on international intervention**

Representatives of Syria's Kurdish community are divided on the issue of seeking a foreign military intervention to help topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is trying to crush a popular uprising.



NATO-led forces, which carried out air strikes in Libya last year after popular protests gave way to an armed uprising, were instrumental in long-time strongman Muammar Qaddafi's fall.

About 210 Syrian Kurds from 25 countries participated in a conference in Arbil, the capital of the autonomous Kurdistan region in north Iraq, which was held from Saturday to Sunday.

The final statement issued at the conference denounced "the violence of

the Syrian security forces against protesters and insisted on the importance of cooperation among Kurds inside and outside Syria."

Jawad al-Mulla, the radical secretary general of the Kurdish National Congress, called during the meeting for "an (autonomous) Kurdish government in Syria" and said he is in favor of a foreign military operation there.

"International intervention is the only solution because we have already had the experience of Saddam Hussein's regime, which would never have fallen without outside intervention," he told AFP, referring to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that toppled the dictator.

"The Syrian Baath (party) is of the same nature as the Iraqi Baath, and nothing can eliminate it except an outside intervention. This is the only solution," he said.

Saadeddin al-Mulla, a leader of the al-Likiti party (Democracy in Kurdish), said: "There are already external interventions, notably by Iran and Turkey, so the U.N. must make

decisions based on Chapter VII of its charter.”

Chapter VII provides for various measures, including military intervention, in cases of threats to peace or acts of aggression.

But NATO so far has ruled out a Libya-style intervention in Syria.

Going to the U.N. is also the wish of Hamad Darwish, the secretary of the Kurdish Progressive Party of Syria, one of the oldest Kurdish groups in Syria.

“If the Arab League cannot impose its solutions, the file should be passed to the Security Council which cannot remain a spectator in the face of what is happening in the country,” he said.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria was more circumspect.

“It is too early for an international intervention, and I believe we must seek a national solution before international pressure in the political, economic, media and diplomatic domains,” its leader Abdel Hakim Bashar said.

Syrian Kurds represent about nine percent of the country’s population and are mainly located in the northeast and Damascus, where they form an important minority.

They say they have been the subject of political discrimination for decades, and demand recognition of their language and culture and want to be treated as full citizens.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/31/191615.html?PHPSESSID=mjitgn9oane3l8v7qk535obak1>

4. ISRAEL - PALESTINE

- **125,000 Likudniks to head to polls**

By GIL HOFFMAN

01/31/2012 06:29

Netanyahu worries low voter turnout at party primary could artificially inflate support for rival Moshe Feiglin; party activists call for boycott of primary to protest PM's policies. By REUTERS



Likud members across the country will go to the polls Tuesday to choose a leader between Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and party activist Moshe Feiglin and elect a new Likud central committee.

About 125,000 people, who have been Likud members for at least 16 months, will be eligible to vote. More than 150 polling stations will be open nationwide from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Results are not expected until after midnight when the winner of the leadership race will call a press conference at the Tel Aviv Fairgrounds.

Both Netanyahu and Feiglin hope to exceed their totals from the last Likud election in August 2007 when Netanyahu won 73.2 percent of the vote and Feiglin 23.4%. The turnout in that race was only 40%.

Sources close to Netanyahu expressed concern Monday that if the turnout in Tuesday's race is not higher, it could artificially inflate support for Feiglin, whose supporters may flock to polling stations in large numbers.

They said they were worried about weather forecasts predicting rain in much of the country.

Netanyahu sent an automated message to thousands of Likud members urging them to come out to vote.

Feiglin's team of volunteers will be working to bring members of his Manhigut Yehudit organization to the polls.

A group of Likud activists who have registered thousands of members eligible to vote in the race have called for a boycott of the primary to protest Netanyahu's policies. The group hopes turnout will be less than 50% so they can call the election's legitimacy into question.

Netanyahu will be voting in Jerusalem and Feiglin near his home in Karnei Shomron.

Likud's Judea and Samaria branch's chairman, Shevach Stern, who initiated the boycott, said he won't be going anywhere near polling stations.

"I will be going to work to support my family," Stern said. "This is just a regular day for me."

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=255835>

- **PLO blames Israel for failure of Amman talks**

By REUTERS01/31/2012 10:12

Top Palestinian decision-making body says PA "will continue the political campaign it began in the international arena." By REUTERS



Palestinian leaders blamed Israel for the failure of exploratory talks aimed at resuming peace negotiations Monday night, and said they planned to explore other ways of bringing about a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The talks ended in Jordan on Jan. 25 without achieving any progress and Palestinian officials said PA President

Mahmoud Abbas planned to consult fellow Arabs on his next move.

"In light of the results of the Amman meetings, the Palestinian leadership holds Israel fully responsible for their failure," the top Palestinian decision-making body, the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said in a statement on Monday.

"These meetings exposed Israel's determination to pursue settlement activity and its rejections of the two-state solution based on the 1967 boundaries," it added in the statement, issued after a meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said on Sunday that peace prospects with the Palestinians looked poor after the Amman talks, at which he said the Palestinians "refused even to discuss Israel's security needs".

The Amman talks were proposed last year by the Quartet of international mediators, after the Palestinians decided to seek United Nations membership for the state

they have been seeking, saying Israel was not serious about reaching a peace deal.

The United States and the European Union have been pushing Palestinians to continue to talk to Israel. The European Union has sought Israeli confidence-building measures, including freeing some prisoners and expanding areas of Palestinian control in the West Bank.

The Palestinians have said there will be no more talks and they will consult an Arab League follow-up committee on Feb. 4 on what to do next.

Wassel Abu-Youssef, an executive committee member, said the Palestinians decided to hold no more exploratory talks with Israel in order "not to give Netanyahu a chance to deceive the world by claiming that talks were in progress".

The executive committee also decided to step up efforts to achieve reconciliation with the rival Hamas group.

"The leadership will work to study a number of political and practical options during the coming days and to continue the political campaign it began on the

international arena," said the statement, read by Yasser Abed Rabbo, secretary general of the PLO executive committee.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=255841>

5. AFRICA

• Americans take shelter in Cairo embassy

A number of Americans have taken refuge in the embassy in Cairo after a crackdown on US-funded non-governmental organisations, the state department said on Monday.



"We can confirm that a handful of US citizens have opted to stay in the embassy compound in Cairo while waiting for permission to depart Egypt," Kate Starr, a state department spokesperson, said.

The rare move by the embassy to offer its citizens diplomatic refuge follows a crackdown by Egypt's military-led government on NGOs, including several

funded by the US government, which saw travel bans imposed on six American staffers including a son of US Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

Egyptian police first raided the groups in late December as part of an investigation into foreign funding of 17 NGOs, part of what civil society groups say has been a broader crackdown on critics of the army's heavy-handed tactics in dealing with continued protests against military rule.

Washington has strongly criticised the move, which has cast a pall over US-Egyptian relations as the most populous Arab nation reaches a critical stage in its uncertain transition away from autocratic rule of former president Hosni Mubarak.

"We have made clear our concerns about this issue and our disappointment that these several citizens are not being allowed to depart Egypt," White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters on Monday.

Leading US lawmakers have also voiced outrage over the incident, and American officials have repeatedly warned that

Washington may have reconsider US aid to Egypt's military.

The six US citizens hit with travel bans work with the National Democratic Institute and International Republican Institute. Both receive US public funding and are affiliated with the two major political parties in the US.

The state department did not provide details on the Americans sheltering in the embassy, although officials at the NDI said none of their staff had been relocated.

Victoria Nuland, another state department spokesperson, described the refuge offer as "a unique situation" and said it did not reflect concerns for the Americans' physical safety.

"There is no expectation that any of these individuals are seeking to avoid any kind of judicial process," Nuland added.

"They approached the embassy staff and the decision was made to invite them as guests."

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/20121302153320790.html>

- **China sends team to Sudan, demands release of workers**

China on Tuesday called for the immediate release of 29 Chinese workers held by Sudanese rebels, as it dispatched a team to the African nation to help defuse the situation.



“China calls on all sides to remain calm and exercise restraint, ensure the safety of Chinese personnel and quickly release the Chinese personnel out of humanitarian concerns,” foreign ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said.

Beijing on Monday dispatched a team to Sudan led by foreign ministry officials to help resolve the standoff, he added in a statement posted on the ministry's website.

The workers were captured when rebels in the South Kordofan state attacked their camp on Saturday. They have been described as hostages by the military but

rebels say they were side victims of fighting with government troops.

“They are okay. They are doing well,” said Arnu Ngutulu Lodi, spokesman for the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N).

“We are very concerned about their security and safety.”

There is growing international concern over the situation in South Kordofan, where the government is fighting ethnic minority insurgents once allied to the former rebels who now rule South Sudan.

The South gained independence from Khartoum in July last year after decades of civil war.

The Chinese workers were involved in a road-building project in South Kordofan, and while 29 remain captive, 17 others have been moved to safety by the Sudanese army, China's official Xinhua news agency said.

China is Sudan's major trading partner, the largest buyer of Sudanese oil, and a

key military supplier to the regime in Khartoum.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/31/191653.html?PHPSESSID=mjitgn9oane3l8v7qk535obak1>

- **Egypt's military rulers lay out presidential election rules**

Egypt's ruling military on Monday laid out the rules governing the country's first presidential elections since a popular uprising ousted veteran strongman Hosni Mubarak.



Only Egyptian nationals born to Egyptian parents and who do not hold dual citizenship can qualify for candidacy, according to the new election law issued by military ruler Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi.

Hopefuls must be endorsed by at least 30 members of parliament or 30,000 citizens eligible voters.

They must have completed their military service and will not qualify if married to a foreign citizen.

Parties with seats in parliament can nominate one candidate for the election which will take place over one day.

No date has yet been set for the presidential poll but the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which took power when Mubarak was ousted, has said it will take place no later than the end of June.

Under the terms of the new law, the election commission overseeing the process will be chaired by the head of the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Earlier this month, SCAF said that candidates for the presidency can start registering from April 15. Frontrunners in the presidential race include former Arab League chief Amr Moussa, a veteran Egyptian diplomat who was foreign minister under Mubarak, as well as Abdel Moneim Abul Fotuh, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Nobel Prize laureate and ex-head of the U.N. atomic watchdog Mohammad ElBaradei decided to drop out of the race, complaining of a lack of democracy in Egypt.

Other candidates include Ahmed Shafiq, the last prime minister to serve under Mubarak, as well as Salafist leader Hazem Salah Abu Ismail, Nasserite head Hamdeen Sabahi and Islamist independent figure Salim al-Awwa.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/31/191649.html?PHPSESSID=mjitgn90ane3l8v7qk535obak1>

6. ARABIAN PENINSULA

- **Air strikes kill 'al-Qaeda fighters' in Yemen**

Several alleged al-Qaeda leaders among 11 killed in apparent drone attacks, according to local residents' accounts.



At least 11 fighters with alleged links to al-Qaeda have been killed in an air strike in

Yemen, according to local residents and tribal officials.

Local residents told the Reuters news agency on Tuesday that an unidentified drone carried out the attack on two vehicles travelling east of the city of Loder in Abyan province in southern Yemen.

A tribal leader said at least four of those killed were local al-Qaeda leaders, according to Reuters.

Tribal officials speaking to the AFP news agency reported four raids in which up to 15 people were killed/

"We think they were carried out by American planes," a tribal official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity and without elaborating.

Three of the raids targeted a school in which al-Qaeda fighters and local fighters were meeting around midnight, while a fourth strike targeted an al-Qaeda control post, sources told AFP.

Al-Qaeda-linked groups have reportedly used Yemen's political turmoil to gain

foothold in the south of the Arabian Peninsula country.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/01/201213165157536665.html>

7. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

• Iran, Afghanistan sign economic MoU

Tehran, Jan 31, IRNA - Iran and Afghanistan ended their second joint economic committee meeting in Kabul here Monday, signing a memorandum of understanding to develop trade and economic relations in various fields.



Iranian Deputy Economy Minister Behrouz Alishiri and his Afghan counterpart Mustafa Mastoor inked the MOU.

The MOU includes boosting cooperation in customs, banking and insurance sectors, as well as fighting smuggling of goods at borders, the report further added.

The Iranian official and his Afghan counterpart stressed the importance of expansion of relations between the two countries in the establishment of peace in the region.

“Iran and Afghanistan economies are complementary for each other; Tehran wishes a stable developed Afghanistan in its neighborhood,” Alishiri underlined.

In response to a question about western sanctions against Iran in the joint conference of Iranian and Afghan official, Iranian deputy economy minister noted that these sanctions like the previous ones are effectless on Iran economy.

Afghanistan and Iran share an extensive history. Afghan-Iranian relations have improved since the fall of the Taliban and Iran has played an active role in Afghanistan’s reconstruction.

Afghanistan shares a long and intertwined history with Iran. There are also deep ties in language, its people and culture. As an eastern dialect of Persian, Dari is the dominant language in

Iran had supported the cause of the Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation. Iran is also strongly against the American military presence in Afghanistan.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), about 1 million Afghan refugees live in Iran.

Since late 2001, the new Afghan government under Hamid Karzai has engaged in cordial relations with Iran. Afghanistan has an embassy in Tehran and a consulate in Mash'had.

Trade between the two nations has increased dramatically since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. Iran and Afghanistan plan on building a new rail line connecting Mashhad to Herat and eventually to Kabul. In 2009 Iran was the fourth largest investor in Afghanistan, which is mainly in the construction of roads and bridges as well as agriculture and health care.

Iran exports oil products, cement, construction material, carpets, home appliances, and detergents and imports

nuts, carpets, agricultural products as well as handicrafts from Afghanistan. Afghanistan imports 90 percent of its needs, except agricultural products.

<http://www.irna.ir/News/Economic/Iran,-Afghanistan-sign-economic-MoU/30789397>

- **Gunmen kill Shi'a man in port city of Karachi**

Islamabad, Jan 31, IRNA – Unidentified gunmen shot dead a Shi'a man in a sectarian-motivated attack in the Pakistani port city of Karachi on Monday, local media reported.



Taseer Abbas Zaidi was killed in FB Area of Karachi when two men on a motorbike open fired on him. He was the brother of noha khawan Raza Abbas.

Tension gripped the area immediately after the incident and unidentified men forced shopkeepers to close their stores.

Police and Rangers have been deployed to the affected areas.

The city has been under the grip of sectarian and political violence during the last couple of weeks, with the death toll standing at above 20 in the month of January.

In another act of targeted killing, 59-year-old Jaffar Mohsin Rizvi the son of Syed Baqar Rizvi, was gunned down in Karachi on Saturday.

Earlier chief of the Shia Ulema Council of Pakistan, Allama Sajid Ali Naqvi demanded a judicial commission to look into the killings of Shiite Muslims in Karachi.

He denied that the killings were sectarian, arguing instead that some people were trying to create trouble between the sects.

He said that the Difa-e-Pakistan Council had agnostic elements in it and his party would keep away from it. The Difa-e-Pakistan Council is an offshoot of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan.

<http://www.irna.ir/News/General/Gunmen-kill-Shi-a-man-in-port-city-of-Karachi/30789364>

**This media summary is prepared by ORSAM Middle East Research Assistants Nebahat Tanrıverdi O and Sercan Doğan. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

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