



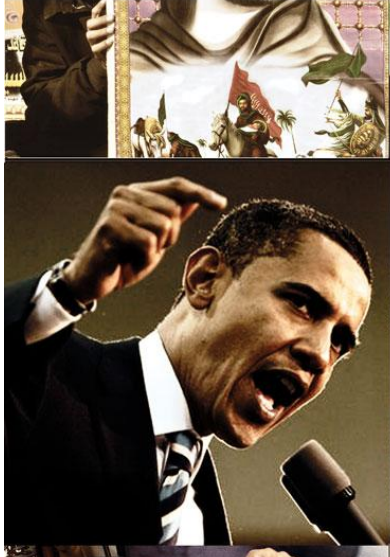
ORSAM
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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24 NOVEMBER / KASIM 2011
NO: 1274

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1. IRAQ / IRAK

- **Riots in Iraq's Salahuddin Tasfirat Prison**

Salahuddin Province Police source told Alsumarianews that riots erupted in Tafsirat prison, central Tikrit this morning. The riots came to protest against transferring 13 detainees to Baghdad after final verdicts were issued against them. The detainees started a sit in inside the prison while security forces rushed to the place in order to avoid violence acts, the same source who claimed anonymity uttered.

<http://www.alsumaria.tv/en/Iraq-News/1-70926-Riots-in-Iraq%E2%80%99s-Salahuddin-Tasfirat-Prison.html>

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

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

from current and potential threats against Iraq.

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Barzani to visit Makhmur this week**

Erbil, Nov. 23 (AKnews) - Kurdish president Massoud Barzani will visit Makhmur, Nineveh Province, this week, according to Ibrahim Sheika Mala, deputy mayor of Makhmur.

A scheduled visit of Kurdish Prime Minister Barham Saleh today was canceled because of this announcement.

"Barzani wants to appraise the living conditions and the general situation of the town," Mala said.

Makhmur, 67 km southwest of Erbil, is among those areas whose ownership is disputed between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil. It was annexed to Nineveh Province in 1996. The majority of its 183,000 inhabitants are allegedly Kurdish.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/274162/>

- **Gathering support for meetings to determine shape of post-U.S. Iraq**

BAGHDAD, Nov. 24 (AKnews) - With the U.S. army withdrawal imminent the deep divides in Iraqi politics and society will

hopefully be addressed by cross-party talks.

The Kurdistan Blocs Coalition (KBC), the Kurdish caucus in the national Council of Representatives in Baghdad lent its voice on Thursday to calls for the leaders of the Council's blocs and coalitions to meet and hammer out deals to resolve disputes.

Vice-President of the Republic Khudayir al-Khuzaei has called for such meetings, while the head of Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar al-Hakim renewed his call for the leaders of the blocs to meet and resolve their disputes.

KBC spokesman Muayyid Tayyeb told AKnews that getting out without positive results will disappoint the Iraqi citizens who will lose confidence in their politicians.

A lot of political disputes are still found between the main three political components that are the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the KBC and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's party Iraqiya List.

The disputes between the Shiite majority INC, to which the Prime Minister Nouri al-

Maliki belongs, and the Sunni-majority Iraqiya List are about the mechanism of state administration and accusations that Maliki is too ready to make executive decisions without referring to his political partners.

A number of issues stuck in the battle between Baghdad and Erbil, most notably who manages the country's oil wealth. Baghdad wants to centralize control, Erbil wants a degree of autonomy in signing contracts, exporting hydrocarbons and reaping the cash rewards.

This issue is supposed to have been resolved by an oil and gas law however an agreement on a draft has yet to be reached. The rift over hydrocarbons has been opened further by the deal signed between U.S. oil supermajor Exxon Mobil Corp. with the Kurdistan Regional Government. Baghdad considers any deal signed with Erbil to be illegal and has threatened to evict Exxon from their southern oil projects.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/274316/>

- **MP calls on Zebari to resign over alleged execution of Iraqi citizen in Saudi Arabia**

Erbil, Nov. 23 (Aknews) - A member of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, Kameela al-Mussawi, called on the Iraqi Minister Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari to step down following the alleged execution of an Iraqi citizen in Saudi Arabia.

The issue of execution of Iraqi citizens accused of smuggling business on the Iraqi-Saudi border was first raised by the Shiite MP when she said earlier this year that some 40 Iraqi citizens waited executions in Saudi Arabia without "fair trials"

Zebari has rejected claims that Saudi Arabia has imposed executions on Iraqi citizens except in criminal cases.

Al-Mussawi, who is a member of the Iraqi Fadhila Party, claimed on her facebook page that Saudi authorities had executed an Iraqi citizen from Thiqr province by decapitating him.

"While we hold the Saudi authorities responsible... we do not absolve the Iraqi authorities who could have saved this

martyr and others who were executed before" a statement posted on her facebook page read.

The statement accused the Iraqi authorities of "keeping silent" and "rejecting these crimes"

"We hold the Foreign Minister most responsible as he rejected with full determination what the Saudi government did and is still doing." the statement quoted Mussawi, therefore "we call for his resignation immediately"

Mussawi's claims that there are 600 more Iraqis in the Saudi prisons and that some 40 have been executed by decapitation. She says 30 others await the same fate.

The claims have been rejected by Iraq's ambassador to Riyadh, Abdul Ilah al-Jumaili. "these reports are not true" he has said claiming to have met with Saudi authorities for the purpose.

<http://www.aknews.com/en/aknews/4/27/4258/>

- **Baghdad Mayor: I'll unveil big, important surprise before the**

Parliament session next Monday; it would rebuff the charges against me



Baghdad (NINA) - Saber Al Esawi, Baghdad Mayor, said he would unveil a big and important surprise before the Parliament session in which he is to be questioned and that the surprise would rebuff charges against him.

Media office of the Mayoralty quoted Esawi as saying he did not answer questions of journalists about charges against him because he is convinced that he and officials in the Mayoralty have detailed and legal answers that refute any accusation or question basing on monitoring purposes or political targeting."

He stressed that "the next Monday will give answers to all questions, which we did not want to circulate in the media and

the MPs and Parliament presidency shall sense the full truth."

It is worth mentioning that Sherwan Al Waeli accused Esawi of corruption through appointing relatives and uneducated people who hold not school certificates.

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

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

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

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

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

In another meeting, the statement discussed with the Canadian ambassador

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

http://en.aswataliraq.info/Default1.aspx?page=article_page&id=145721&l=1

- **PUK, KDP Politburos convene in Erbil**

The politburos of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and Kurdistan Democratic Kurdistan (KDP) convened on Wednesday in Salahaddin resort of Erbil province. The meeting was chaired by Kurdistan region president Massoud Barzani.

During the meeting, they discussed the results of the last visit of president Barzani to neighboring countries and Europe.

They reaffirmed the importance of addressing the security border problems between Kurdistan region and neighboring countries.

They also discussed the preparations of holding Kurdish National Conference.

http://www.pukmedia.com/english/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10582:puk-kdp-politburos-convene-in-erbil-&catid=29:kurdistan-region&Itemid=385

- **U.S. hands over detainees to Iraq, with one exception**

U.S. officials in Iraq have handed over to the Iraqi government all detainees in their custody as the Obama administration prepares to withdraw, the Pentagon said on Tuesday, with the exception of one high profile prisoner.

Lieutenant Colonel Todd Bresseale, a Pentagon spokesman, said the detainee handover had been completed as of Tuesday, with the exception of Ali Mussa Daquq, who U.S. officials say is an operative for the Lebanese group Hezbollah.

"Since the process began a few years ago, we've been working to complete this transfer safely and securely in a way that wouldn't overburden the Iraqi system," Bresseale said.

"Mr. Daquq remains in US custody. There are serious and ongoing deliberations

about how to handle this individual in order to protect U.S. service members as well as broader US interests," he said.

The move to transfer all but one U.S. detainee to Iraqi authorities comes a little over a month before the deadline for withdrawing all U.S. troops from Iraq.

There are now around U.S. 20,000 troops left in Iraq. As commanders race to meet their deadline, only a small force of around 150 U.S. military officials, reporting to a State Department security office at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, are expected to be left on January 1.

The drawdown, laid out in a 2008 bilateral agreement, culminates more than eight years of major U.S. military presence in Iraq, where more than 4,000 U.S. soldiers have been killed since the invasion to topple Saddam Hussein in 2003.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis are believed to have been killed in the sectarian and insurgent slaughter that followed.

Daqduq is suspected by U.S. officials of orchestrating a 2007 kidnapping that resulted in the killing of five U.S. military

personnel. He must be transferred to Iraqi custody by the end of this year under terms of the U.S.-Iraq security agreement.

Some U.S. lawmakers fear Iraq will be unable to hold Daqduq, who was born in Lebanon, for long. U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Obama administration would like the Iraqis to release him to U.S. custody.

Daqduq's fate is one of the remaining unanswered questions following President Barack Obama's decision to abandon efforts to secure an extended military presence in Iraq.

Violence in Iraq is a far cry from what it was at the height of the war in 2006-07, but bloodshed continues and political stability remains elusive.

If U.S. officials were able to remove Daqduq from Iraq, it's unclear where he would go. It appears highly unlikely Obama would want to add to the population at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility in Cuba, which he promised but has so far failed to close.

Reuters, Missy Ryan, November 23

- **Obama Aide Says Iran's Leaders Are Feeling the Strain of Sanctions**

A day after the United States imposed fresh sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program, President Obama's national security adviser argued Tuesday that the administration's pressure campaign had left Iran's leaders economically strained, diplomatically isolated and rent by internal divisions.

"Having actively funded the regime's brutality and the killing of its own people, Iran will be discredited in the eyes of the Syrian people and any future government," Mr. Donilon said in a closely monitored speech at the Brookings Institution. "Iran's isolation from the Arab world will have deepened."

Noting that President Assad had been scorned by the Arab League and abandoned by Turkey's leader, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Mr. Donilon said the Syrian leader's time was running out. He even referred to Mr. Assad's administration as the "Assad group," which made it sound less like a government than a gang.

Since taking over as national security adviser 13 months ago, Mr. Donilon has emerged as one of the most influential foreign-policy voices in the administration. And with the departure next month of another senior adviser, Dennis B. Ross, Mr. Donilon is taking direct control of the delicate Iran portfolio.

Answering critics of the administration, he dismissed fears that the withdrawal of the last American troops from Iraq next month would open the door to rising Iranian influence. The Iraqi people, he said, hold deeply unfavorable impressions of Iran, even those who support political groups backed by Tehran.

"Iran has failed in its effort to shape Iraq into a client state in its own image," said Mr. Donilon, adding that the United States would maintain a "long-term strategic partnership" with Iraq after the troops leave.

Kenneth M. Pollack, director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings, said he did not dispute that characterization. But he added that if cornered, Iraq's Shiite population "will inevitably fall back on the Iranians, not

because they like them, but because they have no one else to turn to.”

On Monday, the United States and its allies announced coordinated sanctions that aimed to sever Iran’s access to the international banking system, but that still fell short of a total cutoff. The United States imposed separate sanctions against Iran’s petrochemical industry, and further measures against its oil industry.

The steps showed both the progress of the administration’s efforts to rally global support and the hurdles still ahead. Russia and China have refused to impose additional measures, leaving the effort less a worldwide campaign than a Western one.

“They’ve been very good partners, frankly,” Mr. Donilon said, when asked about the lack of unity, but he did not elaborate.

He also did not say whether he believed that Iran could be prevented from making a nuclear weapon, a goal the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a recent report the Iranians could be actively pursuing.

Still, in making the case for Mr. Obama’s strategy, Mr. Donilon said that sanctions had slowed down Iran’s progress. Citing the atomic energy agency’s report, he said Iran currently had about 6,000 working centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium to weapons grade, far fewer than the 50,000 centrifuges that the head of Iran’s atomic energy organization predicted in 2007 that Tehran would have by 2011.

He cited the high cost and difficulty Iran had in obtaining equipment to run its uranium enrichment program, though he made no mention of covert efforts to sabotage the program, like the computer worm Stuxnet, a cyberattack that may have had the involvement of both the United States and Israel.

As for Iran’s broader economy, Mr. Donilon said the sanctions had brought it to a virtual standstill, with an inflation rate of 20 percent, high unemployment and “negligible growth,” despite high oil prices. The growing economic sway of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps is a further cause of frustration, he said.

Mr. Donilon pointed to growing fissures within the Iranian leadership, noting that the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad “seem increasingly headed toward a confrontation over the direction of the country.” On Monday, a top adviser to Mr. Ahmadinejad was briefly arrested, in what appeared to be a sign of the mounting tensions.

Mr. Donilon made no mention of recent reports that Israel was considering a military strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities — something that has privately concerned officials. But he repeated the administration’s position that the United States would take no options off the table in dealing with Tehran.

“Pressure is a means not an end, and our policy is firm,” he said. “We are determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.”

The New York Times, Mark Landler, November 22

2. IRAN / İRAN

• N. Chief Underlines Iran's Full Compliance with N. Treaties

TEHRAN (FNA)- Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Fereidoun Abbasi rejected the recent resolution issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency against Tehran, and stressed that Iran has never violated nuclear treaties.

Addressing a number of Iranian parliamentarians, the AEOI chief pointed to the US failure in winning a consensus vote at the recent IAEA Board of Governor's meeting against Iran, and stated, "Americans did not reach their goals. We have not and do not have any diversion from nuclear treaties."

He condemned the resolution approved by the IAEA board against Iran's nuclear program.

After long debates, the IAEA Board ratified a draft resolution against Iran on Friday, but the US failed to win a consensus vote against Iran even after softening the tone of the draft four times.

The weak resolution did not include any concrete punitive steps, reflecting Russian and Chinese opposition for such measures, and only called on Iran to engage more deeply in talks with the IAEA to resolve alleged concerns about its nuclear program.



The resolution was adopted by the board on the basis of a recent report on Iran's nuclear activities by the IAEA Chief, Yukiya Amano. Iran threatened to take legal action against the Vienna-based UN agency for issuing a false report on Tehran's nuclear program.

Iranian Ambassador to the IAEA Ali Asghar Soltaniyeh said Friday that the agency's anti-Iran resolution would not affect Tehran's determination to pursue its work and the report it is based on is "unprofessional, illegal and politicized."

"The United States tried its best, worked closely with Mr. Amano (IAEA Director

General), trying to have a resolution, a tough resolution, but of course many countries did not accept. Therefore, they were forced to have a so-called mild resolution. The notion of resolution is disappointing, and this is a mistake," Soltaniyeh said.

Soltaniyeh said that the agency's resolution would only strengthen Iran's will to continue its nuclear activities.

<http://english.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9007274633>

- **Ahmedinejad net konuştu: İran'ın parasına uzanan elleri koparırız**

FHA- Cumhurbaşkanı Ahmedinejad Amerika ve Batı'yı İran'ın döviz rezervlerine el uzatmaları konusunda sert bir şekilde uyardı.

FHA- İran Merkez Bankası'na yönelik yaptırım kararını değerlendiren Ahmedinejad, İran milletinin döviz rezervlerine el uzatılmasını hırsızlık sayacaklarını ve böyle bir girişime seyirci kalmayıp, gerekeni yapmakta bir an bile tereddüt etmeyeceklerini belirterek Amerika ve Batı'yı uyardı.

Ahmedinejad, Amerika ve Batı, İran ile 32 yıldır bankacılık ve ekonomi bağlamında hiç bir ciddi ilişkisi olmadığı halde yaptırımdan söz ettiklerini belirtti.

Ahmedinejad bu süreçte ilginç olan noktanın Avrupa'nın tutumu olduğunu, Avrupalılar adeta gözü kulağı kapalı bir uşak gibi Amerika ne derse aynısı tekrarladığını vurguladı.

Batılı devletlerin içinde buldukları ekonomik krizden çıkış yolunu başkalarının döviz rezervlerine el uzatmakta aradığının altını çizen Ahmedinejad, bu durumu bir hırsızlık olarak değerlendireceklerini ifade etti.

Ahmedinejad Batı İran'ı uyuşturucu madde kaçakçılığında elde edilen paraları aklamakla suçladığını, oysa uyuşturucu madde kaçakçılığının merkezi Amerika ve Avrupa olduğunu vurguladı.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007274641>

- **Türkler yaptırımlara aldırılmadan İran'da yatırım yapıyor**

FHA-Türk işadamı Ahmet Bahçivan, Batı'nın yaptırımlarına aldırış etmeden

İran'da yatırım yapmaya devam ettiklerini vurguladı.

FHA- "İran'da Yatırım Fırsatları" oturumuna katılan Bahçivan, muhabirimize İran'a yönelik yaptırımları ve yabancı yatırımcıların tutumunu değerlendirdi.

Bahçivan, tüm müslüman ülkelerin kardeş olduğunu ve bu tür yaptırımları umursamadan ortak yatırım ve ticaretlerini geliştirmeleri gerektiğini kaydetti.

Bahçivan kendisi bizzat iki üç yıldan beri İranlı girişimcilerle irtibatta olduğunu ve şimdiye kadar milyonlarca avroluk yatırım yaptığını vurguladı.

Türk işadamı, İranlı müslümanlarla Türklerin kardeş olduğunu ve Türk yatırımcılar komşuluk fırsatını değerlendirerek İran'da yatırım yaptıklarını ifade etti.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007274639>

- **Iranian parliament votes to downgrade ties with Britain**

TEHRAN, Nov. 23 (MNA) -- The Iranian parliament overwhelmingly approved a proposal calling for a reduction in the level of ties with Britain on Wednesday.

After the endorsement of the plan, the lawmakers chanted “God is the Greatest” and “Down with Britain.”

Twenty MPs, namely Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Javad Jahangirzdeh, Hassan Kamran, Mohammad Ashouri, Esmail Kowsari, Mohammad Dehqani, Mohammad Saqaii, Abdolreza Torabi, Hassan Fouladgar, Hossein Fadaii, Mohammad Taqi Rahbar, Parviz Sorouri, Gholam Reza Asadollahi, Mohammad Hossein Farhangi, Ezzatollah Akbari, Shahrokh Ramin, Shahabeddin Sadr, Mohammad Hassan Aboutorabi, Jasem Saedi, and Moayyed Hosseini Sadr, signed the motion.

The move came two days after Britain ordered all British financial institutions to stop doing business with their Iranian counterparts, including the Iranian central bank.

The decision to impose the sanctions was made based on a report by International Atomic Energy Agency Director General

Yukiya Amano released on November 8, in which he claimed that Iran appears to have worked on designing an atomic bomb.

A number of lawmakers had repeatedly called on the Majlis to ratify a plan to reduce or even sever diplomatic relations with Britain due to its hostile attitude toward Iran and its interference in the country’s internal affairs.

On December 19, 2010, the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee voted to completely cut relations with London. The decision was then announced to the Majlis Presiding Board, but no final decision was made.

Following is the text of the proposal:

The British government once again showed its hostile policy toward the nation and government of the Islamic Republic of Iran by making its most recent hostile decision. Besides the dark record of the British government in regard to the Iranian nation before the victory of the Islamic Revolution, which is replete with treachery and crimes, the actions taken by this country after the victory of the Islamic

Revolution are in line with the same policy, an example of which is (their) provision of full support to terrorist groups. Having normal relations with this country runs contrary to the interests of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Foreign Ministry should reduce political relations with the British government to charge d'affaires level within two weeks to safeguard national interests and defend the rights of the Iranian nation and should reduce economic and trade relations to the lowest level.

In the event the hostile policies of the country of Britain are revised, after reports by the Foreign Ministry and through the approval of the Majlis, relations will be upgraded.

The Foreign Ministry is obliged to prepare a report about other countries that have adopted the same attitude as Britain so that the Majlis can make an appropriate decision.

Majlis condemns London's decision to sanction CBI

In addition, 228 MPs issued a statement on Wednesday condemning the British government's decision to impose sanctions on the Central Bank of Iran.

"We, the representatives, condemn this unfair move and announce that such hostile measures have no impact on the strong will of the Iranian nation and government to continue on the right path of the Islamic Revolution, and we will not budge from the divine causes of the late Imam (Khomeini) and the Supreme Leader, and the countries of Britain and the United States will take the dream of the Islamic system's retreat to the grave," part of the statement read.

British ambassador should be expelled

In addition, on Wednesday MP Alaeddin Boroujerdi, who is the chairman of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, called on the Foreign Ministry to expel British Ambassador Dominick John Chilcott.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1467751>

- **Iran ready to offer tenders for 21 oil and gas fields: oil minister**

TEHRAN, Nov. 23 (MNA) -- Iranian Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi has said that Iran is ready to offer contracts for 21 oil and gas fields to domestic and foreign investors.

Addressing an investment opportunities conference in Tehran on Wednesday, Qasemi said that Iran needs about \$50 billion annually to develop its oil industry for the rest of the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (2010-2015), the ISNA news agency reported.

Annual petrochemical production capacity is projected to reach 100 million tons by the end of the Fifth Development Plan, he added.

He went on to say that new policies have been adopted to attract more foreign investment in Iran's oil and gas sectors.

Qasemi had previously announced that Iran's recoverable oil reserves stood at 154.8 billion barrels.

However, Iran's oil reserves currently stand at 158 billion barrels as a result of

new discoveries, the ISNA news agency reported.

"By the end of the Fifth Development Plan, the country's oil production must increase to 5.2 million barrels per day (bpd) and this should be realized through the country's joint fields," ISNA quoted Qasemi as saying.

Officials have put Iran's current output at between 3.6 million and 4 million bpd. National Iranian Southern Oil Company Director Hormoz Qalavand recently told the Fars News Agency that Iran's oil production is 3.92 million bpd.

Iran sits on the world's second largest natural gas reserves after Russia and is trying to attract more foreign and domestic investment, especially in the South Pars gas field, in order to raise its gas production.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1468062>

- **İran'ın balistik füzelerinde menzil açısından bir sınırlama yok**

Tahran, 24 Kasım 2011 - İslam İnkılabı Rehberi Ayetullah Seyyid Ali Hamanei'nin

Yüksek Danışmanı İran'ın balistik füzelerinde sayı ve menzil açısından bir sınırlamanın söz konusu olmadığını söyledi.

MHA – İslam İnkılabı Rehberi Ayetullah Seyyid Ali Hamaneî'nin Yüksek Danışmanı Tümgeneral Yahya Rahim Safevi, El Alem televizyonuna verdiği demeçte, bölgede yeni bir savaşın başlamasının dünya siyasetinde ve ekonomisinde ciddi krizlere yol açacağını söyledi.

"İran, bölgede barış ve huzur istiyor, savaşı başlatan olmayacak, ancak savaş başlatanı pişman edecek. İran, bu konuda çok ciddi ve her açıdan da buna hazır" diyen Safevi, ABD ve İsrail'deki mevcut duruma bakıldığında bunların hata yapacaklarını sanmadığını belirtti.

Her türlü kötü şarta ve senaryoya karşı hazır olduklarını yineleyen Safevi, "Onlar, akıllı olursa yeni bir çatışma başlatmazlar" ifadesini kullandı.

Tümgeneral Safevi, İran'ın etrafında ve bölgede olup bitenleri takip ettiklerini belirterek şunları kaydetti:

"Siyonist rejimin, NATO ile Akdeniz ve İtalya'daki ortak tatbikatı, onların uzun menzilli savaş uçakları bunların türleri ile savaş gemilerinin hareketleri dahil bunların hepsinden tam olarak haberdarız. Ayrıca ABD'nin Akdeniz'den Basra Körfezi'ne kadar ve Kuveyt, Irak, Bahreyn, Katar, BAE gibi Arap ülkelerindeki askeri hareketlerini takip ediyoruz. Hatta onlar, sessiz sedasız işgal edilmiş Filistin topraklarında birkaç tatbikat yaptılar, bunları dahi izledik."

Güçlü istihbarat edinme sistemine sahip olduklarını, söyleyemeyecekleri birçok yerde var olduklarını anlatan Safevi, "ABD ve siyonist İsrail'in, bölgedeki tüm hareketlerini takip ediyoruz" dedi.

Tümgeneral Safevi, İsrail'in İran'a yönelik askeri saldırı tehditlerini son dönemde yüksek sesle yeniden dillendirmesiyle ilgili olarak da, İsrail ordusunun "33 Gün Savaşı"nda Hizbullah karşısında yenilmesini hatırlattı.

Amerikalı ve İsraili siyasilerin, askerlerin bu savaşa tanık olduklarını belirten Safevi, "Hizbullah karşısında başarı elde edemediler, İran'a karşı nasıl zafer elde edebilirler?" diye sordu.

Tümgeneral Safevi, İran'ın olası bir İsrail saldırısı na cevabıyla ilgili olarak da şunları söyledi:

"İran'ın güçlü balistik füzeleriyle siyonist rejimi hedef almasına gerek yok. Bu rejimin milyarlarca dolara kurduğu yerleşim birimleri, Lübnan'daki dostlarımızın, Hizbullah'ın, Katyuşa füzelerinin menzili dahilinde."

Tümgeneral Safevi, "Siyonistler, savaşı başlatmaları halinde hem Hizbullah, hem Hamas hem de İran tarafından hedef alınacaklarını çok iyi biliyorlar" ifadesini kullandı.

İran'ın balistik füzelerinde sayı ve menzil açısından bir sınırlamanın söz konusu olmadığını kaydeden Safevi, "İşgal altındaki tüm Filistin toprakları (İsrail) füzelerimizin menzili içinde yer alıyor" dedi.

Tümgeneral Safevi, bölgedeki füze kalkanlarıyla ilgili olarak da şunları kaydetti:

"Siyonist rejimdekiler dahil Türkiye, Irak, Kuveyt, Katar, Bahreyn, BAE'de bulunan

füze kalkanları, tüm füzelerimizi vuracak güçte değil."

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1468086>

- **Buşehr nükleer santrali tam kapasiteyle hizmete giriyor**

Tahran, 24 Kasım 2011 - İran Atom Enerjisi Kurumu Başkanı, İslam inkılabının zaferinin yıldönümünde Buşehr nükleer santralının tam kapasiteyle çalışmalarını sürdüreceğini söyledi.

MHA - İran Atom Enerjisi Kurumu Başkanı Feridun Abbasi, dünya genelinde nükleer santrallerin işletmesi konusunda önemli test yöntemlerinin bile uygulandığını hatırlatarak, "İran'ın güneyinde yer alan Buşehr nükleer santrali de bir kaç kez test edilmeli ve hiçbir sorun olmadığını kesinleşmeli"dedi.

"Buşehr nükleer santralini işletme konusunda acelemiz yok" diyen Abbasi, İslam inkılabının zaferinin yıldönümünde Buşehr nükleer santralının tam kapasiteyle çalışmalarını sürdüreceğini söyledi.

İran Atom Enerjisi Kurumu Başkanı, Buşehr nükleer santralının yüzde 75 kapasite ile

elektrik üretim sistemine bağlanmasına çalışıldığını kaydetti.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1468176>

- **Ahmedinejad: İran milletinin atom bombasına ihtiyacı yok**

İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı Mahmud Ahmedinejad, İran milletinin atom bombasına ihtiyacı olmadığını vurgulayarak, atom bombasının kültür ve onurdan yoksun kişilerin olduğunu belirtti.



Ahmedinejad “zorba güçler, İran milletinin ilerlemeye doğru hareket ettiğini ve dünyada barış ve adalet bayrağını dalgalandırmaya doğru gittiğini gördüklerinde bu hareket karşısında engel oluşturmak için her türlü bahane ve kompo peşindeler” dedi.

İran milletinin nükleer ilerlemesi karşısında kimlerin bahane aradığı sorusunu gündeme getiren Ahmedinejad “binlerce atom bombası depolayanlar İran’ı atom bombası yapmakla suçluyor. İran milletinin atom bombasına ihtiyacı yok. Atom bombası, ABD yerli halkını yok eden ve ABD topraklarına hakim olan kişilerindir” dedi.

Bazı Batılı devletlerin İran’ın Merkez Bankasına yaptırım uygulamasına işaret eden Cumhurbaşkanı “İran’ın döviz rezervlerinin arttığını ve ekonomi ilerlemeye ulaştığını gördüklerinde kendileri krize düştü ve bahane aramaya başladılar” dedi.

Ahmedinejad, ABD’nin 32 yıldan beri İran ile ekonomi ve finans ilişkileri içinde olmadığını bu yüzden İran Merkez Bankasına yaptırım uygulanmasının yeni bir gelişme olmadığını belirtti.

<http://www2.irna.ir/tr/news/view/line-119/1111249742120411.htm>

3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN

- **Palestinian rivals make fresh attempt at unity**

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal meet in Egyptian capital Cairo on Thursday in a bid to cement a reconciliation deal that has stalled for more than six months.

After a summer of skepticism over prospects for a real rapprochement between Abbas's secular Fatah movement and its Islamist rival Hamas, a new optimism has emerged in recent weeks.

"President Abbas intends to deploy all possible efforts to reach a global Palestinian agreement and reach an understanding on a common political vision for all the movements," senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmed told AFP on Wednesday.

He had said the previous day that the agenda of the meeting "has been set and agreed, with no time limit – and it's not a meeting of last resort."

"The meeting will focus on... the political agenda and future prospects for the Palestinians after Israeli intransigence blocked the peace process," he added.

It would also address other issues such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the formation of a government and "overcoming obstacles to the implementation of the reconciliation agreement," he said.

After the meeting, they will announce a date in December for a new round of talks between all the Palestinian factions in Cairo at which all issues would be discussed "including the government," he said.

Hamas Number Two Mussa Abu Marzuk told AFP late Wednesday: "We want this meeting to open a new page and a new hope for the Palestinian people."

Fatah and Hamas, which respectively control the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed a surprise agreement in May to end their long-standing bitter rivalry, but it has yet to be implemented.

It called for the immediate formation of an interim government to pave the way for presidential and parliamentary elections within a year.



But the two sides have so far failed to agree on the composition of the caretaker government and, in particular, who will head it.

Abbas is understood to have insisted on keeping his Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, a former IMF official who is highly regarded abroad, in a demand which has been repeatedly rejected by Hamas.

But on Tuesday, Ismail Radwan, a Hamas leader in Gaza, said both sides had agreed to rule out Fayyad as a candidate.

“That issue has been resolved and we are now discussing the general criteria for choosing a head of government in

accordance with the reconciliation agreement,” he told AFP.

A Palestinian independent who recently met Hamas leaders told AFP that the group had agreed to limit itself to “peaceful popular resistance” for 12 months in an offer that had been conveyed to Abbas and helped bring about the Cairo meeting.

Hamas, he said, was grappling with the fact that although a successful unity deal would allow Fatah the freedom to act politically in Gaza, Hamas would not be free to do the same in the occupied West Bank over fears it would provoke a crackdown by Israeli forces.

PLO Central Council member Ahmed Majdalani said the future of Hamas’s armed forces in Gaza was also a sensitive matter.

“The security issue is complex and delicate as it is one of the main means for Hamas to ensure its control of Gaza, and it is not easy for it to give up its weapons,” he said.

“Hamas has in effect stopped its military action (against Israel) for the past three

years and is trying to impose its authority in the field of security in Gaza by prohibiting the firing of rockets,” he added.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178910.html?PHPSESSID=ucltfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Two Egyptian soldiers killed on Israel-Egypt border**

Second incident on Israel-Egypt border in which IDF forces exchange fire with suspected drug smugglers who infiltrated into Israel.



Two Egyptian soldiers were killed Wednesday near the Israel-Egypt border during a shootout with suspected Bedouin drug smugglers, Egyptian officials reported. In a separate incident, IDF forces shot at Egyptians who crossed into Israel.

According to Egyptian sources, two Egyptian soldiers were killed after exchanging fire with a group of Bedouin suspected of being drug smugglers, in Egyptian territory near the border with Israel.

About 90 minutes afterward, IDF forces from the Golani Brigade identified a group of people who infiltrated into Israel from Egypt. They were awaited by others on the Israeli side, which led the IDF to suspect they were drug smugglers. IDF forces fired into the air and then toward their knees, and the Egyptians returned fire.

The IDF Spokesperson said one of the suspected drug smugglers were hit.

In August, a terrorist squad infiltrated Israel from Sinai, which resulted in the deaths of eight Israelis along Highway 12, which runs along the border.

Israel has recently been working on constructing a 70-kilometer-long fence along its border with Egypt, originally planned to block infiltration of asylum-seekers from Africa but now primarily meant to keep terrorists from Sinai out.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/two-egyptian-soldiers-killed-on-israel-egypt-border-1.397351>

- **Lieberman: Israel won't give Fatah-Hamas unity government even one dime**

FM says Israel will not recognize or negotiate with a Palestinian unity government if it does not accept the principles outlined by the Mideast Quartet.



Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Wednesday that if a future Palestinian unity government between Fatah and Hamas will not accept the principles outlined by the Mideast Quartet, such as the recognition of Israel, then Israel will not transfer it any funds.

"Israel will not recognize it, will not negotiate with it, and will not transfer it even one dime," Lieberman said during a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Montenegro, referring to the Palestinian Authority's tax funds that Israel has been withholding for more than a month after UNESCO accepted the Palestinians as a member.

Lieberman added that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has been mounting enormous pressure on the international community to push Israel into transferring the money to the Palestinian Authority, but at the same time actively pursuing a unity government with Hamas, which does not adhere to international demands to halt terror and respect the agreements signed with Israel.

"Israel will not transfer money to those who are interested in destroying it, and if Abbas will be Hamas' partner then it is clear that he is not a partner for peace," Lieberman said.

The principles outlined by the Quartet of Middle East peace mediators call on any Palestinian government to respect past

peace agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist.

Meanwhile, the Quartet's envoy to the Middle East, Tony Blair, criticized Israel on Wednesday for not releasing the tax revenues. "Only those who oppose peace" benefit from withholding the funds, he said, calling on Israel to transfer them without delay to the Palestinian Authority.

European Union Ambassador Andrew Stanley also called on Israel to release the tax revenues. Stanley said that the freeze hinders the PA's ability to provide services and maintain security. He said the European Union transferred large sums of money to build Palestinian Authority institutions, and their freeze is jeopardizing its investment.

Henrik Malmquist, head of the EU Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories, warned in a briefing that the Palestinian Police cannot function properly without the funds, adding that if Israel continues to withhold them it may make the police officers less inclined to combat terrorism.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/lieberman-israel-won-t-give->

[fatah-hamas-unity-government-even-one-dime-1.397318](http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/lieberman-israel-won-t-give-fatah-hamas-unity-government-even-one-dime-1.397318)

- **Low expectations as Abbas, Mashaal set to meet in Cairo**

Hamas says its position towards Israel will not differ after formation of unity government with PA; EU: Cooperation with PA will end if Hamas joins government without recognizing Israel.

On the eve of the long-awaited summit between Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in Cairo, the Islamist movement said its position toward Israel would not change after the formation of a Palestinian unity government.

Hamas also reiterated its opposition to the appointment of current PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as head of the proposed unity government.

Abbas and Mashaal were scheduled to hold talks in the Egyptian capital on Thursday on ways of implementing the reconciliation accord that was reached between Hamas and Fatah last May.

“ Hamas will not change its position toward Israel, which will remain our enemy,” Hamas legislator Salah Bardaweel said. “ Hamas won’t recognize Israel and won’t give up its principles.”



If it doesn’t, however, and a unity government is formed, this will run the risk of endangering EU cooperation with the PA.

John Gatt-Rutter, the acting EU representative to the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and UNRWA, said at an EU press briefing in Jerusalem that Brussels was sending messages to the PA that it would only continue its cooperation with a Hamas-Fatah unity government if Hamas moderated its positions on Israel. He said the cooperation he was referring to was both political and economic.

EU Ambassador Andrew Standley said the EU’s longstanding position that it would

not engage with Hamas until it recognized Israel, abandoned terrorism and accepted previous Israeli-Palestinian agreements has not changed.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud Zahar, a senior Hamas official in Gaza, voiced skepticism about the possibility of achieving a breakthrough during the Abbas-Mashaal summit.

Zahar said the summit would be nothing but a “protocol meeting” that would not last long. The summit would be followed by a dialogue between Fatah and Hamas over all the issues mentioned in the Egyptian-brokered reconciliation accord, first and foremost the formation of a unity government, the future of the PLO, security-related issues and holding PA presidential and parliamentary elections, he said.

Without guarantees for the implementation of the reconciliation accord, the “entire reconciliation process between Fatah and Hamas would fail,” Zahar said. He said Abbas decided to renew his efforts to achieve reconciliation with Hamas “only after all doors were closed in front of him” – a reference to the

PA's failed statehood bid at the UN Security Council.

Hamas also wants guarantees the next elections will be free and fair, the Hamas official said. "Judging from my experience with Abbas, it would be a mistake to be optimistic," Zahar said.

He reiterated Hamas's opposition to a unity government headed by Fayyad and stressed the identity of the next prime minister would be discussed between Abbas and Mashaal.

Zahar was quoted by the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper as warning that Israel would try to thwart the reconciliation efforts between Fatah and Hamas.

The Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram on Wednesday quoted PA officials as saying Abbas was continuing to insist Fayyad head any new government.

Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, on the other hand, expressed cautious optimism about Thursday's summit in Cairo. He said the chances of achieving unity were higher in wake of the Arab Spring, the collapse of the peace

negotiations between the PA and Israel, and the US administration's failure to fulfill its pledges to the PA.

The EU's Gatt-Rutter, meanwhile, also expressed doubts a Fatah-Hamas rapprochement would emerge from the scheduled Cairo meeting.

"I think there is a lot of hype about this meeting, simply because it is taking place," he said. "I personally have very low expectations, and I believe there is a very low probability the meeting will lead to an agreement on a new government.

I think the parties are too far apart and are not ready to overcome the obstacles needed to reach an agreement. I wouldn't expect much progress."

Gatt-Rutter also said the more progress there was in the diplomatic process with the Palestinians, the less interest there would be in the rapprochement.

<http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=246780>

- **'Palestinian Oslo breaches spur settlements'**

Visiting Joseph's Tomb, Yishai says Jews should be allowed to frequent site more often; criticizes IDF on women singing issue.

The only way to deal with the Palestinian breaches of the Oslo Accords is to accelerate construction in Jerusalem and the West Bank, Interior Minister Eli Yishai said Wednesday night during a speech at Joseph's Tomb.



Yishai visited the tomb for prayers, along with another 1,400 worshipers in a visit coordinated with the IDF and the police.

"Many citizens desire and long to visit Joseph's Tomb - which according Oslo belongs to us - but at the moment is it only possible to visit once a month, hidden, at night. This is something that needs to be corrected."

Yishai criticized the fact that Palestinians actually control the site.

Yishai also spoke about the controversial issue of women singing in the IDF, which has recently provoked heated debate after comments made by chief rabbi of Samaria and rabbi of the Elon Moreh settlement, Elyakim Levanon. The rabbi said that religious IDF soldiers should risk facing army fire rather than listening to women sing. Yishai criticized army policy: "On the one hand they ask that haredim [ultra-Orthodox Jews] join the army, and they enlist in droves," said Yishai. "It's a great shame that haredim have the will to enlist but they are not allowed to work according to their faith and tradition. I hope this does not affect their desire to join," he added.

While the majority of the worshipers had permits to enter the site, The IDF arrested 13 Israelis Thursday morning, on suspicion of infiltrating into the tomb illegally. Police say that they issued a restraining order against three of the detainees.

The IDF also arrested a Palestinian who threw stones at soldiers guarding the entrance to the tomb.

<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=246800>

4. AFRICA and EGYPT / AFRİKA ve MISIR

- **Egypt's military apologizes for crackdown that left more than 35 protesters killed**

Egypt's military rulers apologized on Thursday for the deaths of demonstrators at the hands of police as protests demanding an immediate handover to civilian control entered a seventh day.



At least 35 protesters have been killed since Saturday – when clashes erupted – and more than 2,000 injured, prompting expressions of concern from Western governments and a call from the United Nations for an independent inquiry into the “excessive use of force.”

Demonstrators again camped overnight in Tahrir Square, the iconic heart of the 18 days of protests that ousted veteran president Hosni Mubarak in February, to demand that the military leadership step down immediately.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces presents its regrets and deep apologies for the deaths of martyrs from among Egypt's loyal sons during the recent events in Tahrir Square

Statement by the Egyptian army

Meanwhile, police and protesters are observing a truce after five days of deadly street battles. The truce came into force around 6 a.m. and was still holding by late morning.

The mass protests, which placatory moves by the military have failed to dampen, threaten to eclipse the first post-Mubarak parliamentary elections due to begin on Monday.

“The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces presents its regrets and deep apologies for the deaths of martyrs from among Egypt's loyal sons during the

recent events in Tahrir Square,” it said in a statement on its Facebook page.

“The council also offers its condolences to the families of the martyrs across Egypt.”

The statement came after a speech by SCAF chairman Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi on Tuesday which was aimed at placating protesters in the square but was heavily criticized for not making mention of the deaths at the hands of police.

The SCAF vowed to investigate and prosecute all those behind the deaths.

It also pledged to offer assistance to the families of the dead and injured, and to set up a military field hospital in Tahrir Square.

Activists said sporadic clashes continued into the night on Mohammed Mahmud, a flashpoint street connecting the heavily-fortified interior ministry to the square, where dozens of tents have been pitched.

Lamenting renewed bloodshed

Egyptian-American columnist Mona al-Tahawy was arrested overnight after joining the protests for democratic

change. Her last post on Twitter said she was “beaten, arrested in interior ministry.”

“The square boils,” read the front-page headline of the state-owned al-Akhbar newspaper, while al-Ahram lamented the “renewed bloodshed.”

The protest deaths prompted an unusually strongly worded statement from al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest seat of learning, calling on police not to shoot at demonstrators.

Grand imam Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayyeb said that any dialogue “stained with blood is doomed and its fruit will be bitter.”

Al-Azhar “calls on the police leadership to immediately issue orders not to point their weapons at demonstrators... no matter what the reasons,” Tayyeb said in a recorded address broadcast on state television.

It calls “on the armed forces to throw all their weight behind preventing confrontations between one people,” he added.

Three people died in clashes with police in and around Tahrir on Wednesday, a medic said.

A fourth was shot dead in the northwestern city of Mersa Matruh when security forces clashed with demonstrators trying to storm a police station, state media said.

Clashes were also reported in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, where hundreds of people protested outside the military headquarters, calling for the immediate transfer of power to a civilian administration.

International criticism of Egypt's military rulers is mounting. A rights group raised the death toll for the wave of violence to at least 38.

The United Nations has strongly condemned authorities for what it deems an excessive use of force. Germany, one of Egypt's top trading partners, has called for a quick transfer of power to a civilian government. The United States and the U.N. secretary general have already expressed their concern over the use of

violence against mostly peaceful protesters.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay called the images coming out of Egypt "deeply shocking," and urged the authorities to end their "clearly excessive use of force" against protesters.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague expressed deep concern at the "unacceptable violence and loss of life" in and around Tahrir.

Egypt's military ruler pledged in a rare televised address on Tuesday night to hold a presidential election by the end of June – six months earlier than scheduled.

Tantawi said he was also ready to transfer power immediately, through a referendum, "should the people wish it."

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178926.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Voter mistrust, fears of low turnout threaten Moroccan elections**

Moroccans take part in a demonstration organized by the February 20 Movement

to boycott the upcoming legislative elections in Rabat. (Reuters)

Moroccans take part in a demonstration organized by the February 20 Movement to boycott the upcoming legislative elections in Rabat. (Reuters)



Moroccan authorities should stop harassing people campaigning for a boycott of parliamentary elections this week, Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday.

The New-York based organization said Moroccan police had brought in more than 100 people for questioning about the distribution of pro-boycott leaflets or other efforts to urge voters not to cast a ballot on Friday.

“The rate of voter participation will be closely watched because it is seen as a gauge of public enthusiasm for the reforms that King Mohammed VI initiated

during 2011,” Human Rights Watch said in an emailed statement.

“Some groups have urged a voter boycott, saying that the palace-led reforms do not go far enough to enhance the separation of powers and curb royal prerogatives.

“Harassing people who support a boycott is just as bad as harassing those who support a particular party or candidate, and casts a shadow over the vote,” it added.

King Mohammed backed constitutional changes and brought the vote forward by 10 months as part of a plan by the palace to bring fresh faces into a government associated in the minds of many Moroccans with corruption.

But the pro-boycott camp, led by a group called the February 20 Movement, said the vote just promises more of the same.

The official MAP news agency on Monday denied that the police had arrested anyone for leading the boycott campaign after newspaper reports of several arrests linked to the boycott campaign.

“Summoning scores of boycott activists in cities around the country to police stations for questioning amounts to a state policy of harassment - whether or not they are formally arrested and eventually charged,” Human Rights Watch said.

A law governing the Moroccan parliament reserves punishments of one month to one year in prison and a fine of \$1,200 to \$6,000 for “anyone who attempts, through the use of false information, false rumors, or any other fraudulent means, to change the vote of voters, or to push one or more voters to refrain from voting.”

Human Rights Watch considered that law, which was implemented in October, to be incompatible with “strong affirmations of human rights, including freedom of expression” under the new constitution adopted in July 2011.

No elections’ ambience in Morocco?

Moroccans feel that aside from the constitutional reform, nothing has really changed, meaning that the elections of 2011 will be a copy of the elections 2007 and that is what will probably keep the participation low

Abdellah Baha, deputy secretary general of the Islamist Justice and Development Party

There are few signs here that elections are even taking place in Morocco.

Posters and raucous rallies for candidates are absent in the cities and instead there are just stark official banners urging citizens to “do their national duty” and “participate in the change the country is undergoing.”

“The parties have presented the same people for the past 30 years, the least they could do is change their candidates,” said Hassan Rafiq, a vegetable vendor in the capital Rabat, who said he didn't plan to vote.

Like elsewhere in the Arab world, Moroccans hit the streets in the first half of 2011 calling for more democracy, and King Mohammed VI responded by amending the constitution and bringing forward elections.

But since then the sense of change has dissipated.

The real challenge for these polls, in which an opposition Islamist party and a pro-palace coalition are expected to do well, will be if many people come out to vote in the face of a strident boycott campaign by democracy campaigners.

It's a sharp contrast to the electric atmosphere that characterized Tunisia's first free elections just last month.

"Moroccans feel that aside from the constitutional reform, nothing has really changed, meaning that the elections of 2011 will be a copy of the elections 2007 and that is what will probably keep the participation low," said Abdellah Baha, deputy secretary general of the Islamist Justice and Development Party.

The 2007 elections, the first with widespread international observation, had just 37 percent turnout, and some fear it could be even lower this time around.

A close U.S. ally and popular destination for European sunseekers, Morocco with its many political parties and regular elections was once the bright star in a region of dictatorships.

But all that has changed with the Arab uprisings that toppled dictators in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Now a political system that holds elections but leaves all powers in the hands of a hereditary king does not look so liberal.

"Morocco can no longer say it is the only one with pluralism or that it has the 'most,' (pluralistic)," said Jeffrey England, of the National Democratic Institute, a U.S.-based organization dedicated to furthering democracy.

Yet the Arab Spring has not left the country untouched, and Moroccans today do expect greater freedoms and reform. "Even if the system structure hasn't changed much, it has certainly changed the population's perceptions and expectations," said England, the institute's resident director in Morocco.

Islamists party leading?

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi-Fihri dismissed any threat deriving from an Islamist party possibly leading the government.

"The parties will have to come together in coalitions, in fact some are already doing

so, so I don't think there is much risk," he told French news channel France 24. "On the contrary, we have continuity with a change of face."

Moroccan political analyst Matti Monjib explained that the king "wants a government that doesn't govern too much," which could be a problem if any new coalition really tries to change things in the kingdom, such as the PJD's promised anti-corruption drive - which might even target palace cronies.

Even with activists agitating against the vote and a middle class disillusioned with the process, Morocco's traditional voting machine will still be functioning on Friday.

In rural areas, notables will gather up peasants and bring them to polling stations and instruct them whom to vote for, while in the slums around the big cities, local power brokers will deliver the votes of the poor.

The traditional voting system could also buoy a coalition of eight pro-palace parties that could form the next government and ensure the king has a

friendly prime minister carrying out his wishes.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178922.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Tunisia security forces fire in air during protest**

Tunisian security forces fired into the air to try to disperse more than 3,000 protesters who were preparing to attack a government building in the provincial town of Kasserine. On Wednesday, witnesses said.

The protesters took to the streets because they felt the country's new authorities had failed to recognize local people's contribution to a revolution earlier this year which inspired the "Arab Spring" uprisings.

The clashes underlined the tough task facing the new, Islamist-led government, elected in the country's first democratic vote last month, in meeting expectations for jobs and better living standards in poor provincial towns.

“Young men are burning tyres in the street,” one resident, Bouraoui Sadaoui, told Reuters from the town, which is about 300 km (200 miles) southwest of the capital, Tunis. “They are throwing rocks and surrounding the town jail.”

“They want to set fire to the prison ... The military fired into the air and are using tear gas to disperse the people,” he said. “Several people have been injured by tear gas.”

Tunisia became the birthplace of the “Arab Spring” uprisings in January when a wave of protests forced former President Zine al-Abidine to flee to Saudi Arabia.

The revolution set the template for uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Syria and Yemen which have re-shaped the political landscape of the Middle East.

Kasserine was one of the first towns to rise up against Ben Ali’s rule. It also suffered some of the highest casualties of the revolution when Ben Ali’s police opened fire on demonstrators.

Martyrs “slighted”

The trigger for Wednesday’s protest was a ceremony a day earlier to inaugurate Tunisia’s new constitutional assembly in the capital.



During the ceremony the names of people killed in the revolution were read out, but residents said some of Kasserine’s victims were omitted.

“The situation is serious here,” a local man called Adnen Nasri told Reuters from Kasserine.

“People are very angry about how the town was marginalized by missing out the names of the town’s martyrs, who were at the origins of the revolution.”

“Thousands of young people are now in a stand-off with the security forces in front of the prison,” he said.

Tunisia's revolution delivered democracy to a country which had lived under autocratic rule since its independence from France half a century ago.

But instead of improving living standards, as many people hoped, the revolution made the average Tunisian worse off.

Tourists, the main source of foreign revenue, and some investors were scared off by the instability that accompanied the uprising. Economic growth has slumped and unemployment is forecast to rise this year.

The moderately Islamist Ennahda party, which dominates the new governing coalition, has said it is committed to creating jobs, especially for towns like Kasserine away from the more affluent area on the Mediterranean coast.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178865.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Libya can try Gaddafi son if conditions right-ICC**

TRIPOLI, (Reuters) - The International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor said

on Wednesday that Saif al-Islam Gaddafi can be tried inside Libya provided there is a judicial process that does not shield him from justice.

Speaking in Tripoli, Luis Moreno-Ocampo said it was very important for Libya that Saif al-Islam, the captured son of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, was tried inside the country.

The ICC earlier this year issued a warrant for Saif al-Islam's arrest on charges of crimes against humanity.

"My standard, the standard of the ICC, is that it has to be a judicial process that is not organised to shield the suspect. That's it, that's it," Moreno-Ocampo told reporters.

"The point is that for Libya, and I respect that, it is very important to do the cases in Libya. This is a right and I have nothing to say. I'm not competing for the case."

Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the last of the former Libyan leader's sons whose whereabouts were still unknown, was captured on Saturday in an ambush deep in the Sahara desert.

A day later, an NTC spokesman said local officials in the desert town of Sabha had confirmed former spy chief Abdullah al-Senussi had also been captured.

An NTC official called Saif al-Islam Gaddafi's arrest "the last chapter in the Libyan drama".

"Libya can decide to let the ICC do it, but Libya has decided not to so it's ok. It's their right to do it," Moreno-Ocampo said.

"Murder is murder, prosecution is a prosecution, I hope the Libyans can find a way to do it but that's why we're discussing modalities. Maybe for a few months, for some months, we'll keep working together."

Libyan officials have promised a fair trial but the country still has the death penalty on its books, whereas the severest punishment the ICC can impose is life imprisonment.

"I hope they do a fair trial. My point is that we are not a system to monitor fair trials. We are a system to ensure no impunity," Moreno-Ocampo said.

"It's not my role to tell them how to hold a fair trial."

"There are so many different traditions, it is difficult to say what is fair."

He said the concern was that the process was "genuine". "Genuine means, in the ICC context, that it should be a process not organised to shield the accused," Moreno-Ocampo said.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27409>

5. JORDAN and LEBANON / ÜRDÜN

• Lebanon to summon U.S. envoy over 'CIA operatives'

Lebanon's Hezbollah-dominated government on Wednesday announced it would summon the U.S. ambassador to Beirut after the powerful Shiite group said it had succeeded in exposing CIA operatives.

"The cabinet has decided to summon U.S. Ambassador Maura Connelly to question her on this issue," said Agriculture Minister Hussein Hajj Hassan, who

represents the Iran-backed Hezbollah in the 30-seat government.



“This is not the first aggression of its kind on Lebanon... and cannot be divided from Israeli (spies),” Hajj Hassan told reporters during a break from a cabinet meeting.

The statement comes hours after the militant group said it succeeded in uncovering Central Intelligence Agency operatives who had infiltrated Hezbollah and urged the government to take immediate measures against the U.S. embassy.

“Lebanese intelligence vanquished U.S. and Israeli intelligence in what is now known as the intelligence war,” said Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah, who heads parliament’s telecommunications committee.

“Our security... has exposed several American and Israeli plots on Lebanon,” Fadlallah told reporters outside parliament.

“We call on the Lebanese government to take immediate action... and raise the issue with the United Nations and embassies, so that the whole world is aware of what the U.S. embassy in Lebanon is doing.”

Wednesday’s comments follow reports earlier this week which said Hezbollah had uncovered several operatives within the movement working for the CIA.

In the first acknowledgement of infiltration since the group’s founding in the 1980s, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in June had said members of his group confessed to being CIA agents.

Nasrallah accused his arch-foe Israel of turning to the U.S. spy agency after failing to infiltrate his party, slamming the American embassy in Beirut as a “den of spies.”

The U.S. embassy in Beirut dismissed the accusations as “empty.”

More than 100 people in Lebanon have been arrested on suspicion of spying for Israel since April 2009, including military personnel and telecoms employees.

Lebanon and Israel technically remain in a state of war, and convicted spies face life imprisonment or the death sentence if found guilty of contributing to Lebanese loss of life.

Lebanon has protested to the United Nations over the alleged Israeli spy networks.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178867.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **U.N. deputy chief visits south, meets peacekeepers**

BEIRUT: U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro arrived in the southern border town of Naqoura Thursday to inspect the work of U.N. peacekeepers in south Lebanon.

Migiro met U.N. officials upon arrival at the Naqoura headquarters before heading

to villages to inspect troops from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

At midday, Migiro will visit a UNIFIL-funded school project in Naqoura.

Migiro will return to Beirut for talks with Lebanese officials at the end of her tour of south Lebanon.

A U.N. statement said Migiro, who arrived in Lebanon Wednesday as part of a four-day visit, would meet Lebanese leaders including President Michel Sleiman, Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

During her stay, Migiro will also head the 16th meeting of the U.N.'s Regional Coordination Mechanism and meet chiefs and staff of U.N. agencies in Lebanon.

“The RCM aims at strengthening coordination and cooperation among U.N. agencies working in the Arab region, sharing information on all fronts, facilitating joint work and reinforcing it to better serve countries of the region and boost the efficiency of U.N. work,?? the U.N. statement said.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/Nov-24/155026-un-deputy-chief-visits-south-meets-peacekeepers.ashx#axzz1ec6VIGxa>

- **Lebanon to ask ambassador for clarification on CIA spy network: sources**



BEIRUT: Lebanon's Foreign Ministry will ask U.S. Ambassador Maura Connelly for clarification regarding an alleged spying network organized by the CIA in the country, ministerial sources told The Daily Star Wednesday.

Late in the afternoon, Hezbollah's Agriculture Minister Hussein Hajj Hasan told reporters at the Grand Serail that the foreign minister would summon Connelly over the spy network allegedly operating through the U.S. Embassy in Awkar, Metn.

The Cabinet is currently in session and Information Minister Walid Daouk is

expected to hold a news conference after the meeting.

Earlier Wednesday, Hezbollah MP Hasan Fadlallah told reporters outside Parliament that the resistance group had succeeded in exposing CIA operatives in Lebanon and urged the government to take immediate measures against the U.S. Embassy near Beirut.

"The resistance blinded American intelligence eyes," Fadlallah said outside Parliament

The MP's comments came days after reports emerged that Hezbollah had uncovered several operatives within the movement working for the CIA.

The U.S. embassy in Beirut dismissed the accusations as "empty."

Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour met with Connelly earlier Wednesday at the ministry's headquarters. The meeting lasted 40 minutes and the ambassador left the meeting without making any statements.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/Nov-23/154954-lebanon-to-summon-us-ambassador-over-spying-network.ashx#axzz1ec6VIGxa>

6. SYRIA / SURİYE

- **France, EU say ready to talk with Syria's opposition as death toll mounts**

France backs the creation of humanitarian corridors in Syria and considers the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) a legitimate partner with which it wants to work, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe said on Wednesday.

After meeting SNC leader Burhan Ghaliun in Paris Juppe said he would take to Brussels the idea of escape routes for civilians fleeing Assad's forces.

"If there could be a humanitarian dimension to the zones, which could be secured to protect the population, that's a question that must be studied," Juppe said, adding that he considered Ghaliun's Syrian National Council (SNC) a "legitimate interlocutor."

Juppe's comments came as the European Union is also said it was ready to engage with the SNC and other opposition groups, a spokesman for the EU's foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said.



"The EU stands ready to engage with the Syrian National Council and other representative members of the opposition who adhere to non-violence and democratic values," spokesman Michael Mann told Reuters news agency.

Mann said that the foreign policy chief Ashton had met on Tuesday with leaders of the Syrian National Council.

"During the meeting she stressed the importance of the opposition maintaining a clear commitment to a peaceful and non-sectarian approach,"

A total of 15 civilians were killed on Wednesday by Syrian security forces

across the country today, according to the Syrian Revolutionary Council.

The United Nations says the conflict in Syria has claimed more than 3,500 lives, mostly civilians, since the protests against the embattled President Bashar al-Assad erupted in mid-March.

The SNC, headed by Paris-based Ghaliun, is one of at least four Syrian opposition movements, but is seen as the most representative and claims to speak for activists both inside and outside the country.

Speaking to reporters after a joint news conference with Juppe, Ghaliun said the Syrian National Council did not want to see the fledgling Free Syrian Army, an armed rebel group, take the fight directly to the regime's far superior forces.

“We would like this army to carry out defensive actions to protect those who have left the (regime's) army and peaceful demonstrations, but not take on offensive actions against the army,” he said.

Syria's official SANA news agency on Wednesday reported the funeral of nine

soldiers, members of the security services and police in Homs, Daraa in the south and suburbs of the Syrian capital.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday called for Assad to go, branding his onetime personal friend a coward and warning he risked the same fate as dictators who met bloody deaths.

But China criticized a U.N. human rights resolution condemning Assad's regime over its deadly crackdown on dissent.

“Using a resolution to pressure other countries is counterproductive to easing the situation,” Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Liu Weimin said.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/24/178868.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Syrian activists raise death toll to 28**

BEIRUT (AP) — The death toll from a day of security raids and violence in Syria has risen to at least 28 people, activists said Wednesday, as President Bashar Assad came under mounting worldwide pressure to end eight months of bloodshed.

Tuesday's violence came as a key U.N. committee voted to condemn human rights violations by Assad's government and called for an immediate end to all violence. Nearly 4,000 people have been reported killed in the military crackdown on the popular uprising since March.

Two main activist groups, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Local Coordinating Committees, documented the deaths, which were reported in the central cities of Hama and Homs, the eastern city of Deir el-Zour and elsewhere.

The nonbinding resolution adopted by the General Assembly's human rights committee Tuesday calls on Syrian authorities to implement an Arab League peace plan, agreed to earlier this month, "without further delay."

It also urges the withdrawal of government tanks from the streets, the release of political prisoners, a halt to attacks on civilians, and allowing observers into the country.

The resolution, sponsored by Britain, France and Germany, was passed by a vote of 122-13 with 41 abstentions. It must now be approved at a plenary session of the 193-member world body, where its adoption is virtually certain.

U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice said in a statement that the committee's first-ever resolution on Syria's human rights violations "has sent a clear message that it does not accept abuse and death as a legitimate path to retaining power."

Syria tried to prevent a vote on the resolution, introducing a motion to take "no action" but it was overwhelmingly defeated.

Syria's U.N. Ambassador Bashar Ja'afari again accused Britain, France and Germany of "waging a media, political and diplomatic war against Syria" and encouraging armed groups to engage in violence rather than national dialogue with the government.

Although the European powers sponsored the resolution, he said, "it is not a secret that the United States of America is the

mastermind and main instigator of the political campaign against my country."

The resolution had more than 60 co-sponsors including Syria's fellow Arab nations Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Morocco, Bahrain and Kuwait, and neighbor Turkey, which has been outspoken in its criticism of Assad's crackdown and is hosting Syrian opposition groups.

Syria only got support from Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Iran, Myanmar, Nicaragua, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zimbabwe, who objected to targeting a single country for what they called political motives.

It was a victory for the three European powers who failed last month to win approval for a legally binding Security Council resolution threatening sanctions against Syria for its violent crackdown because of Russian and Chinese vetoes.

<http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=1&id=27408>

- **Russia Rejects any Foreign Intervention in the Countries' Domestic Affairs**

MOSCOW, (SANA)-Russia on Wednesday underlined commitment to the basic principles of the international law, respect for the countries' sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement following talks in Moscow between Deputy Foreign Minister Michel Bogdanov and Turkish Assistant Advisor to the Foreign Ministry Hailt Cevit that the two sides discussed the situation in Syria, Libya and Egypt as well as the settlement in the Middle East.

The statement underlined the need for overcoming the crises through the peaceful political solution, based on dialogue.

Meanwhile, Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia at the UN Sergey Karev underlined his country's rejection of exploiting the human rights' issue as a pretext for intervening in the countries' internal affairs.

"Russia has abstained from voting at the UN General Assembly meeting on a draft resolution about the human rights in Syria because it is not permissible to exploit the human rights to interfere in Syria," Karev said in a statement to ITAR Tass News Agency.

He renewed his country's rejection of any foreign intervention in Syria's domestic affairs, adding "Syria doesn't need preaches, but it needs a constructive help and an immediate halt of violence."

<http://www.sana.sy/eng/337/2011/11/24/383688.htm>

- **Kararın Oylama Şekli Kabul Edilemez**

BAĞDAT – Irak Parlamentosunda Başbakan Nuri el-Maliki'nin başkanlık ettiği Kanun Devleti Grubu; Arap Liginin Suriye ile ilgili politikasını kınadı.

Kanun Devleti Grubu üyelerinden Milletvekili Yasin Mecid bugün basın konferansında yaptığı açıklamada; kimi devletlerin Suriye'ye karşı izlediği çifte standartlı politikayı kınadığını dile getirerek başta Arap Ligi olmak üzere kimi

devletlerin bu politikayı açıkça izliyor olmasından üzüntü duyduğunu aktardı.

Kanun Devleti Grubunun Suriye ve Arap Ligi kararıyla ilgili tutumunun kaynağını Irak'ın ulusal çıkarlarından aldığını belirten Mecid; üyesi olduğu grubun komşu olması itibarıyla Suriye'de yaşanan olayların Irak'ı da çok etkileyeceği görüşünde olduğunu beyan etti.

Parlamentoda toplam sayısı 275 olan koltukların 89'una sahip olan Kanun Devleti Grubunun; halkların taleplerini şiddet ve silahla ifade etmesine karşı olduğunu dile getiren Milletvekili Mecid; Irak Hükümetinin daha önce yaptığı açıklamada Arap Liginin Suriye'ye karşı aldığı kararın oylama şeklinin kabul edilemez olduğunu ifade ettiğini vurguladı.

<http://www.sana.sy/tur/237/2011/11/23/383725.htm>

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

- **Expat remittances trouble Saudi authorities**

Saudi Arabia's suggestion last month that it will try to limit how much money expatriate workers send home showed concern about the cost of having foreigners make up nearly a third of the population.



An estimated 9 million foreign workers and their dependents remitted 26.8 billion riyals (\$7.1 billion) out of the country in the second quarter of this year, central bank data shows. That amount was equivalent to 17 percent of Saudi Arabia's current account surplus at a time of historically high oil revenues.

With the stability of the global financial system threatened by the euro zone debt crisis, and Saudi Arabia keen to use more of its monetary resources domestically under a \$130 billion government spending plan announced this year, the outflow of funds may be starting to look uncomfortably large.

Saudi Arabia, which wants to develop its economy to reduce its reliance on oil revenue, also appears to be waking up to the opportunity cost of having so much economic output produced by foreigners, most of whose money is not spent or invested within the kingdom.

"The balance of payment considerations are obviously a risk, and they are a structural risk in that if oil prices come down, they would become a challenge," said Jarmo Kotilaine, chief economist of National Commercial Bank in Jeddah.

"But the Saudi economy has gone through a number of rough patches over the decades without compromising the basic stability of the monetary situation."

He added, "It's not an unmanageable problem, but the issue is the opportunity cost of the remittances. Many residents live here for the pure purpose of making as much money as they can and sending as much of it back home to their families as they can. That money isn't being used to stimulate domestic economic activity."

Private sector

Expatriates account for nine out of 10 private-sector jobs in Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter. They fill roles that range from domestic service and factory work to management positions in large finance companies.

The value of their remittances has almost doubled in the past five years from an officially recorded 15.3 billion riyals in the second quarter of 2006. Three economists told Reuters that the true figures for money outflows were probably much higher because they did not include informal transfers.

“In practice, when oil prices are high remittances go up, and when oil prices fall, remittances go down automatically because employment falls and new recruitment falls,” said Khan Zahid, chief economist of Riyadh Capital.

Labor Minister Adel al-Fakieh said in an Oct. 22 television interview that the Labor Ministry was “preparing a monitoring program aimed at reducing the huge quantity of transfers of foreign workers”.

He did not elaborate, and economists said it would be difficult to develop practical

measures to limit remittances, partly because money can be taken out of the kingdom in many different ways.

Most of the money is thought to be remitted by lower-paid workers, most from South and Southeast Asia, who frequently carry cash with them on trips home rather than making formal bank transfers.

Higher-paid workers tend to spend more of their income inside Saudi Arabia because they are more likely to bring their families with them, but they often have their salaries paid directly into foreign bank accounts.

An even bigger obstacle to controlling remittances is the fact that foreign workers are needed to keep the economy running. Weaning businesses off them is a difficult and long-term task.

“Theoretically there is an opportunity cost because when expats do not consume here they are not adding to domestic demand, which is a leakage from the economy,” said Zahid.

“But foreign workers are producing more than they consume, making a net contribution to the economy. The only way to avoid this is to have Saudi workers instead of foreigners.”

Unemployment

Addressing unemployment among Saudi nationals, which officially stands at 10 percent, is a key goal for King Abdullah in a country where the population is growing more quickly than the government can provide public sector jobs.

Around half of Saudis in full-time employment work for the government, central bank data shows, and King Abdullah announced the creation of tens of thousands of new Interior Ministry jobs earlier this year.

On Oct. 21, Eqtisadiyah newspaper reported that the kingdom planned to cap the number of long-term foreign workers at a fifth of its total population -- a measure which, if implemented, could mean an exodus of several million people. The newspaper quoted an unnamed Labor Ministry source and did not give a time frame or details of how the goal might be reached.

Economic reforms over the past decade have aimed at creating jobs by strengthening the private sector, while the government has tried to force companies to employ Saudis in these posts by using a quota system.

“Saudi Arabia went through years of ambitious regulatory and institutional reforms which had significant success in accelerating economic growth, yet somehow the job opportunities for Saudis haven’t materialized in the way they were supposed to,” Kotilaine said.

Earlier this year, the government refined its “Saudisation” program by rewarding companies that employ more Saudis and making it more difficult for those that employ fewer Saudis to gain visas for expatriate workers.

Efforts to move local people into the workforce are contradicted, however, by a decision to provide a more generous social safety net in the wake of this year’s Arab Spring social unrest elsewhere in the region. In March, King Abdullah announced an unemployment benefit which will start to be paid when the new

Islamic year begins at the end of this week.

Economists also point to a perception among private companies that a substantial proportion of Saudis are unwilling to work hard, lack the skills to replace foreign workers and are protected by a legal framework that makes them hard to sack.

For these reasons, cutting the flow of worker remittances out of the country substantially may be impossible for at least several years.

“You can trim remittances and it won’t have too much impact on the economy,” said Gamble. “But there are costs to the private sector because they need to train nationals to make them suitable for the positions they would want. It means the transition may well cause some short-term disruption.”

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/23/178825.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Bahrain’s Independent Commission issues findings over months of unrest**

The head of Bahrain’s Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) announced Wednesday its findings from a report on the February and March unrest in Bahrain, revealing violations of human rights.



“Failure to punish abusers led to culture of impunity,” Cherif Bassiouni said in a press conference in Manama announcing the findings of the inquiry by a panel commissioned by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

The death toll from the unrest reached 35, the official said, which included five security personnel.

Bassiouni said that Pakistanis and other foreigners residing in Bahrain, which is home to the U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet, were also targeted during the crackdown, which led to 30 places of worship being destroyed.

“The BICI Report has pointed out the impact of the unrest on the Government’s performance and the detrimental repercussions on citizens and residents’ lives, giving a full account of events taking place in Bahrain,” a cabinet statement on the BICI report read.

A Government taskforce to scrutinize the report has been instructed to hold its first meeting on Thursday, the official Bahrain news agency reported. It will submit a proposed work plan before the Cabinet convenes for its weekly session.

Following the start of the Arab Spring, protesters began occupying a square in the capital Manama in February — just days after crowds in Cairo’s Tahrir Square celebrated the downfall of Hosni Mubarak.

Weeks later, security forces stormed Manama’s Pearl Square, tore down the landmark six-pronged monument at its center and imposed martial law.

The Egyptian-born human rights lawyer Bassiouni said, however, that the inquiry did not find evidence that Gulf troops,

who intervened during the unrest, committed abuses.

“The commission did not find any proof of human rights violations caused by the presence of the Peninsula Shield forces,” said Cherif Bassiouni, the head of Bahrain’s Independent Commission of Inquiry, announcing the findings of the probe commissioned by King Hamad.

No Iranian involvement

The rights inquiry head also said the panel did not find proof of an Iranian role in the unrest.

“Evidence presented to the commission did not prove a clear link between the events in Bahrain and Iran,” Bassiouni said.

The findings were given in the hope that they could ease the political stalemate between the government and the opposition.

In response to the findings. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa told the conference that the Bahrain government accepts criticism in rights report and spoke of change

needed and action to be taken on the security forces in question.

"The government welcomes the findings of the Independent Commission, and acknowledges its criticisms," the statement said.

"We took the initiative in asking for this thorough and detailed inquiry to seek the truth and we accept it."

"The country's laws need change to bring them in line with international standards ... Officials accused of abuses will be held accountable and replaced," the King added.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/11/23/178814.html?PHPSESSID=ucttfr9cldm5vts1vnsb15cdu4>

- **Saudi security clash with gunmen near Qatif**

Kingdom blames foreign elements for unrest in Shia-dominated eastern province that left two people dead and six wounded.

Two people have been killed and six others wounded in an exchange of gunfire between security forces and what the

Saudi interior ministry called criminals serving a foreign power in the country's oil-producing Eastern Province.

"These casualties have occurred due to the exchange of gunfire with unknown criminal elements who have infiltrated among citizens, and are firing from residential areas and narrow streets," the interior ministry said on Thursday.

Wednesday's deaths brought the toll to four people dead and nine wounded since unrest erupted in in the province last week.

"It [the ministry] warns whoever deludes himself about violating order that he will be deterred strongly, and that the security forces in the area are fully authorised to deal with the situation and end these criminal actions."

- Interior Ministry, Saudi Arabia

The ministry earlier this week denied that Shias had been killed by bullets fired by police in Qatif, an administrative unit of the province where a large Shia community resides.

Echoing language it used after an attack on a police station in the eastern province last month, the ministry said: "The goal of those who provoke unrest is to achieve dubious aims dictated to them by their foreign masters."

The previous references to foreign meddling have been widely interpreted as Shia-dominated Iran, the Sunni-led kingdom's rival for influence in the Gulf.

Sunni Arab monarchies in the region saw Iran as the force behind unrest earlier this year in majority Shia Bahrain.

Tehran has denied repeated accusations that it is trying to destabilise Bahrain.

It has also dismissed an alleged plot that US authorities said last month had implicated Iran's security agencies in a plan to kill the Saudi ambassador in Washington.

Saudi Arabia has avoided mass protests that have led to the ousting of four Arab leaders this year, reacting to the unrest in the region by promising to spend some \$130bn on housing and other social benefits for its citizens.

Shia unrest

Small-scale protests have taken place in the Eastern Province, where authorities have responded by deploying armed riot police and establishing checkpoints, activists said.

The province is connected by a 25km causeway to Bahrain, where Riyadh sent troops earlier this year to help the fellow-Sunni government crush protests led by Shia activists.

Saudi's Shia community complains of systematic discrimination, neglect in public spending and incitement against them in religious sermons and educational materials.

The kingdom, which is founded on an austere form of Sunni Islam and regards itself as the guardian of that faith, disputes this.

Officials point out that King Abdullah has appointed Shia officials to advisory government bodies in the kingdom.

A Saudi activist said earlier this week that three people had been killed by gunfire in the region, including two he said were hit by police bullets during a protest march.

Another activist said police had fired on protests in Qatif and the nearby town of Awamiya.

The ministry at that time said two people had died in incidents in the region, including a shooting at a police checkpoint near which tyres had been set on fire. It said it would investigate the incidents.

In its statement on Thursday, the ministry said tyres had been burned and roads blocked during the funeral that saw the most recent shootings, and said it was ready "to deal with the situation".

"It [the ministry] warns whoever deludes himself about violating order that he will be deterred strongly, and that the security forces in the area are fully authorised to deal with the situation and end these criminal actions."

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/2011112465955365750.html>

- **Yemen's Saleh agrees to transfer power**

Yemenis express mixed reactions in response to Saleh signing Gulf initiative to begin transfer of power.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has signed a deal to hand over his powers under an agreement brokered by the Gulf Co-operation Council.

The deal signed on Wednesday, will see Saleh leave office in 30 days, making way for Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, the Yemeni vice-president, to negotiate a power transfer with the opposition in return for a promise of immunity from prosecution.

As part of the deal Saleh will retain the honorary title of president, yet his deputy is expected to form and preside over a national unity government before presidential elections take place within 90 days.

In response to the deal, there were mixed reactions some protesters celebrated, while other rallied in Change Square in the capital, Sanaa, and said they would reject a deal giving the president immunity.

Live footage of the ceremony aired by Saudi state television showed Saleh sign the Gulf- and UN-brokered agreement in Riyadh's Al-Yamama royal palace watched over by members of the Yemeni opposition as well as Saudi King Abdullah and Gulf foreign ministers.

Saleh, who has ruled Yemen since 1978, spoke of the cost of the uprising to Yemen, but did not mention the demands of protesters who called for his ouster. Instead, he referred to the protests as a "coup" and called a bombing of his palace mosque that seriously wounded him "a scandal."

After signing the deal, Saleh said his government welcomes the partnership with what he called the "brothers in the opposition" and pledged a "real partnership" with them.

The Saudi king hailed the signing as marking a "new page" in the Yemen's history.

Saleh, 69, will now seek medical treatment in New York, UN chief Ban Ki-moon said on Wednesday.

"He [Saleh] told me that he would come to New York after signing the agreement to have medical treatment," Ban said, giving details of a telephone conversation they had on Tuesday.

Saleh had rejected signing similar agreement to step down in the past few months, sometimes resisting at the last minute.

Fresh protests

In response to the deal, Yemenis voiced both joy and frustration. Celebrations erupted in Sanaa as Yemenis danced through the street, but many others said the deal is not enough for them

Al Jazeera's special correspondent in Sanaa said that those gathered are "protesting his [Saleh's] immunity from any legal repercussions".

"There is a tension in the air. Most people are here to celebrate, but they see it only as a victory for now," our special correspondent said.

Saleh's family members continue to have powerful posts in the military and

intelligence service, and it is unclear how much political power Saleh will have.

"For youth revolutionaries this deal is not accepted," Ibrahim Mohamed al-Sayidi, a Yemeni youth opposition activist, told Al Jazeera.

For more on Yemen, visit our Spotlight page

The US welcomed the deal and Mark Toner, a state department spokesperson, said: "The United States applauds the Yemeni government and the opposition for agreeing to a peaceful and orderly transition of power."

In May, Saleh's supporters - many of which also reject the GCC deal - took to the streets besieging the UAE embassy in Sanaa where foreign ambassadors were gathered for a signing ceremony. The UAE is one of the members of the GCC.

The signing was postponed and clashes broke out for the first time between Ahmar's men and Saleh's forces in Al-Hasaba.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2011/11/2011112355040101606.html>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN / AFGANİSTAN - PAKİSTAN

• UN Faults Enforcement Of Afghan Law To Protect Women

November 23, 2011

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

A new United Nations report says the government of Afghanistan has "not yet succeeded" in implementing a two-year-old law intended to protect women from abuse, including rape, forced marriage, and the trading of women to settle disputes.

The report says the law is enforced by authorities in only a small percentage of cases.

It says that between March 2010 and March 2011, prosecutors opened 594 investigations involving crimes under the Law On The Elimination Of Violence Against Women. The report says this was only 26 percent of 2,299 incidents of alleged abuse registered by the Afghan human rights commission.

The report says prosecutors went on to file indictments in just 155 cases, or 7

percent of the total number of crimes reported.

The report adds that in some cases, complainants were pressured to withdraw their allegations or to settle for mediation by traditional councils.

It says that sometimes prosecutors didn't proceed with mandatory investigations for violent acts and, in other cases, police ignored complaints.

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

- **UN mission calls on Afghan gov't to protect women rights**

KABUL, Nov. 23 (Xinhua) -- The UN mission in Afghanistan on Wednesday called on Afghan government to protect the women rights and improve the implementation of law for "Elimination of Violence against Women" in the country.

"Judicial and law enforcement officials are so far implementing sporadically the two-year-old law Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) supporting the equality and rights of Afghan women, and the Government has not yet succeeded in implementing the law to the vast majority

of cases of violence against women," the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in a report released here on Wednesday.

The justice sector in some Afghan provinces has applied the EVAW law which is encouraging. But the low number of cases prosecuted and tried shows that a much more active collective effort by justice system actors, government decision-makers and others is needed to urge judicial and local authorities to apply the law to all cases of violence against women, said Staffan de Mistura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA.

"Progress on the status of Afghan women over the last ten years, including their 38 percent access to schools, their 69 MPs in Parliament and some women who have qualified as airplane pilots, is undermined by uneven implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women Law," De Mistura said in the report.

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

- **U.S. Republican Presidential Candidates Focus On Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran**

By Charles Recknagel

November 23, 2011

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty

The eight candidates from the Republican Party who hope to defeat U.S. President Barack Obama in November next year all agree on one thing.

They all accuse Obama of failing to deal adequately with three key foreign-policy challenges to the United States: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran.

But when it comes to the details of what they would do, big differences emerge. And it was those differences that dominated the Republican candidates' debate in Washington D.C. on November 22.

The debate, hosted by CNN and two conservative Washington think tanks, took place just blocks from the White House and before an audience largely made up of foreign-policy experts.

During the two-hour session, the candidates -- few of whom have significant foreign-policy experience -- broke from their usual debate of domestic issues to speak about the U.S. place in the world.

Gingrich: 'Cut Off Iran's Gas'

The leading candidate at the moment is former U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich, who took a lead role in revitalizing the Republican Party in the 1990s and hopes to do so again now.

Gingrich charged Obama with weakness in pursuing U.S. goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan and promised a tougher approach.

"You want to keep American troops in Afghanistan?" Gingrich asked. "You accept hot pursuit, you say no sanctuaries, you change the rules of engagement, you put the military in charge of the military side, you overhaul the State Department and AID [Agency for International Development] so they get the job done and you do it for real and you do it intensely and you tell the Pakistanis: 'Help us or get out of the way, but don't

complain if we kill people you're not willing to go after on your territory where you have been protecting them."

Gingrich similarly faulted Obama for taking too soft an approach with Iran. Where Obama has first sought to engage, and then sanction Tehran, Gingrich called peaceful regime change the better strategy.

He said that "if we were serious, we could break the Iranian regime" within a year, starting with "cutting off the gasoline supply to Iran and then, frankly, sabotaging the only refinery they have." Gingrich's approach appears based on the fact fuel shortages in Iran have previously prompted popular protests against the government.

The former U.S. House speaker called a peaceful change of government in Iran preferable to a war or military strikes, and said the United States should bomb Iran's facilities to prevent it from becoming a nuclear power only "as a last recourse."

Romney: 'Bring Pakistan Into 21st Century'

Another candidate, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who has frequently topped the candidates' popularity ratings in the past, also took a firm line on Afghanistan and Pakistan. But he chose softer words.

Charging Obama with wanting to leave Afghanistan early, he said he would follow the advice of U.S. military commanders and keep troops there to deter the nation from again becoming a terrorist safe haven.

And he called Pakistan in need of urgent development. "We need to bring Pakistan into the 21st century, or the 20th century for that matter, so that they can engage throughout the world with trade with modernity."

On Iran, Romney called for isolating the regime through "crippling economic sanctions," cooperation with Israel, and a stronger aircraft-carrier presence in the region. He said crippling sanctions would make gasoline more expensive but "there's no price which is worth an Iranian nuclear weapon."

Perry: 'Sanction Iran's Central Bank'

Most of the other candidates, too, charged Obama with laxity toward Islamabad and Tehran -- the two foreign capitals that came up most frequently in the debate.

Governor Rick Perry, once a chief rival for the front-runner position, vowed to cut off aid to Pakistan until it cooperates more with Washington.

"They've showed us time after time that they can't be trusted and until Pakistan clearly shows that they have America's best interests in mind, I would not send them one penny," Perry said.

Perry also vowed to step up sanctions on Iran. Addressing another candidate in the debate, he said: "We need to sanction the Iranian Central Bank. That would be one of the most powerful ways to impact that and as a matter of fact, Congressman [Ron] Paul, [what] we need to do before we start having any conversations about a military strike is to use every sanction that we have.

"And when you sanction the Iranian Central Bank, that will shut down that

economy. At that particular point in time, they truly have to deal with the United States."

Paul: 'Mind Our Own Business'

Two of the remaining five candidates in the debate have also been past leaders in popularity polls before seeing the ratings drop in the campaign so far. They are U.S. Representative Michele Bachmann, the only woman in the race, and Herman Cain, the only former business executive.

Bachmann broke with the leading candidates to take a softer stand on Pakistan, calling it a nuclear state Washington cannot afford to see fail.

"At this point I would continue that aid [U.S. aid to Pakistan] but I do think the Obama policy of keeping your fingers crossed is not working in Pakistan and I also think that Pakistan as a nation is kind of like too nuclear to fail."

Cain underlined his concern over Iran's nuclear program by saying he would support Israel if it had a "credible plan" to attack Iran.

The three candidates in the field who have yet to enjoy a stint at the top of the pack sought to use the debate to reignite their campaigns.

Representative Ron Paul -- a consistent antiwar voice -- called for an end to U.S. military adventures overseas. Calling for a more modest foreign policy that he said would make the United States less of a target for attacks, he asked, "Why don't we mind our own business?"

Former Governor Jon Huntsman Jr., said, "Our interests in the Middle East is Israel and preventing Iran from going nuclear."

And former Senator Rick Santorum said Pakistan's nuclear weapons made it imperative that it remains a U.S. friend.

The debate was the 11th of the Republicans' presidential campaign so far, as the party looks to its first formal nomination contest in January.

The nomination contests, which will take place state-by-state through the course of next year, will end with just one candidate representing the party in the November 2012 presidential election.

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

- **107 insurgents killed in Afghanistan in one month: official**

KABUL, Nov. 23 (Xinhua) -- A total of 107 insurgents had been killed in Afghanistan over the past month, a spokesman for the Afghan Defense Ministry said on Wednesday.

"Some 107 armed insurgents had been killed and 98 more insurgents injured during military operations and armed clashes in different parts of the country over the past one month," General Zahir Azimi told reporters in a weekly press briefing here.

According to Azimi, the Afghan army, during joint and independent operations with NATO-led coalition forces, have also detained 511 suspected insurgents all over the country in the same period of time.

However, he also confirmed some 65 personnel of the Afghan National Army were also killed over the last one month in military operations, direct clashes with insurgents and Improvised Explosive

Device (IED) attacks elsewhere in the country.

Afghan officials often use the word "insurgents" referring to the Taliban.

Taliban insurgents, who have intensified activities since the militant group announced to launch a spring offensive against Afghan security forces and NATO-led troops stationed in Afghanistan on May 1, have yet to make comments.

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

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**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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