

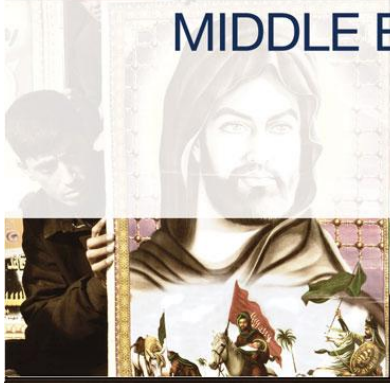
**ORSAM**  
ORTADOĞU STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STRATEGIC STUDIES

# GÜNLÜK ORTADOĞU BÜLTENİ

## MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

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- \* **Bölge Ülkelerinde İç Siyaset**  
Domestic Policy in the Middle East countries
- \* **Irak'ın Yeniden Yapılanma Süreci**  
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**MIDDLE EAST BULLETIN**  
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**NO: 1283**

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## 1. IRAQ / IRAK

### • Kerkük'ten, Van'a 50 Konteyner Ev Gönderildi

Irak'ın Kerkük kentinde Kerkük Valiliği tarafından başlatılan yardım çerçevesinde Van'daki depremzedeler için 50 adet konteyner ev gönderildi. Toplanan nakdi yardımlar ile ilk aşamada 50 adet konteyner ev yaptırıldı. Bugün düzenlenen törenle bu 50 ev 25 TIR'a yüklenerek Van'a doğru yola çıktı.

Kerkük Valisi Necmeddin Ömer Kerim, Cihan Haber Ajansı'na Türkiye'nin dar günlerinde yanlarında olduklarına dikkat çekerek, bugünde sıranın kendilerinde olduğunu söyledi. Bu yardımı yola çıkardıklarından dolayı çok sevinçli olduğunu kaydeden Vali Kerim, "Bugün 50 adet konteyner ve içinde yatak battaniye ve diğer eşyaları ile birlikte Vanlı kardeşlerimize gönderiyoruz. Vanlı kardeşlerimiz zor durumda olduğunu biliyoruz. Orada havalar çok soğuk. Bu yardım onlara kısmen de olsa yarar sağlayacağını ümit ediyoruz." ifadelerini kullandı.

Valilik enformasyon sorumlusu Dilir Samad ise "Türkiye komşu ülke olarak her zaman yanımızda oldu. Biz de bugün onlara küçük

de olsa bir yardımda bulunduk. Onlara insani bir yardım gönderiyoruz. Allah yardımcıları olsun. Biz buradan onları televizyonlardan izlerken donuyoruz. Büyük bir musibettir, onlara elimizden gelen yardımı yapmaya devam edeceğiz." dedi.

Bijar Adnan adlı bir Kerküklü vatandaş ise Vanlı kardeşlerinin çektiği acılarını buradan kendilerinin de hissettiklerini ifade ederek, "Çok can kaybı oldu. Özellikle de bugünlerde hava çok soğuk çocuklar hastalanıyor. İnşallah gönderdiğimiz yardımlar azda olsa onlara derman olur. Bir de başkalarına örnek olur da onlar da buraya yardım gönderiler." şeklinde belirtti.

Daha sonra 25 TIR'a yüklenen 50 adet evi Kerkük Valisi Necmeddin Ömer Kerim Van'a doğru uğurladı. Kamyonların 2 gün içinde Van'da olması bekleniyor.

<http://www.kerkuk.net/?p=7736>

### • Saldırıları Petrol İhracatını Etkilemeyecek

Irak Petrol Bakanlığı, ülkenin güneyindeki petrol boru hattına yapılan bombalı saldırının petrol ihracatını etkilemeyeceğini bildirdi.

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Bakanlık sözcüsü Asım Cihad, yeterli stokları bulunduğunu, hasar gören boru hatlarının onarımı süresince başka bir boru hattını kullanacaklarını belirtti.

Sözcü, onarımın bir hafta kadar sürebileceğini söyledi.

Irak'ın güneyindeki petrol alanlarından Basra çevresindeki depolama tanklarına ham petrol taşıyan boru hattına dün bombalı saldırı düzenlenmişti. Patlamalar büyük yangına yol açmıştı.

Yangının bu sabah söndürüldüğü kaydedildi. - BAĞDAT

(Anadolu Ajansı)

<http://www.haberler.com/saldirilar-petrol-ihracatini-etkilemeyecek-3189946-haberi/>

## • Davutoğlu Irak Maliye Bakanı ile Görüştü

Dışişleri Bakanı Ahmet Davutoğlu'nun Irak Maliye Bakanı Rafi İsvi ile yaptığı görüşmede PKK terörizmi ele alındı.

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Dışişleri Bakanlığındaki görüşmede, Türkiye-Irak siyasi ve ekonomik ilişkileri de görüşüldü.

Görüşmede, ABD'nin çekilme kararı ışığında Irak'taki siyasi durum ve PKK terörizminin de ele alındığı belirtildi.

Diğer taraftan Ürdün Dışişleri Bakanı Nasser Judeh'in, Dışişleri Bakanı Davutoğlu'nu telefonda aradığı bildirildi.

Görüşmede, Suriye hakkındaki gelişmelerin ele alındığı kaydedildi

<http://www.haberler.com/davutoglu-irak-maliye-bakanisile-gorustu-3189650-haberi/>

- **ABD'den Irak'a 36 savaş uçağı**

Tahran, 14 Aralık 2011 - ABD, Irak'a yapacağı "F-16" savaş uçağı satışını 18 adetten 36 adete çıkardığını açıkladı.

ABD yönetimi, Irak Başbakanı Nuri El Maliki'nin ABD ziyareti sırasında Irak'a yapacağı 18 adet F-16 savaş uçağı satışına 18 adet daha ekleyeceğini bildirdi.

ABD Ulusal Güvenlik Konseyi Sözcüsü Tommy Vietor dün yaptığı açıklamada, Irak'ın kendi hava sahasını koruyabilmesi için ABD'nin bu ülkeye "F-16" model 18 savaş uçağı satma niyetinde olduğunu belirtti. Vietor, bu konuda ayrıca "Hükümetimiz bugün, Irak'a 18 "F-16" uçağı satılmasına dair kararı hakkında Kongre'ye bilgi verdi" ifadesini kullandı.

Irak Başbakanı Nuri El-Maliki, daha önce yaptığı açıklamada Irak'ın zayıf olan hava savunmasını güçlendirmek için daha önce yapılan anlaşmayı yineleyerek, satın almayı planladıkları savaş uçağı sayısını iki katına çıkaracaklarını, ABD'den 18 adet yerine 36 adet F-16 savaş uçağı satın alacaklarını ve ülkesinin bağımsızlığını korumak için savaş uçaklarına ihtiyaç duyduklarını söylemişti. Irak Hükümeti, 27 Eylülde yaptığı açıklamada ABD'den

alacağı savaş uçaklarının ilk ödemesini yaptığını belirtmişti

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1483302>

- **Laricani: Irak bölgede önemli siyasi ve ekonomik bir aktör**

Tahran, 14 Aralık 2011 – İran İslami Şura Meclisi Başkanı, Irak İslami Devrim Yüksek Meclisi Başkanı ile görüşmesinde, Irak'ın bölgede önemli siyasi ve ekonomik bir aktör olduğunu söyledi.

Mehr haber ajansının bildirdiğine göre, önceki gün Ammar el Hekim ile görüşen Ali Laricani, İran ve Irak'ın kültürel ve mezhepsel bağlarına işaret ederek, "iki ülkenin uzun dönemli ortak ekonomik ve sanayi projeleri, münasibetlerin pekiştirilmesine yardımcı olacaktır" dedi.

İslami Şura Meclisi Başkanı, Irak'ın bölgesel siyasi durumunun güçlenmesinden memnuniyetini dile getirerek, İslami Şura Meclisi de bu ülkenin gelişimine ve kalkınmasına destek verdiğini belirtti.

Bölgede ve uluslararası denklemlerdeki halk kıyımlarının stratejik etkisini anlatan Laricani, Irak'ın bölgede önemli siyasi ve

ekonomik bir aktör olduğunu, İran ise bu ülkeye destek verdiğini açıkladı.

Irak İslami Devrim Yüksek Meclisi Başkanı Ammar el Hekim ise bu görüşmede ikili ilişkilerin geliştirilmesinden memnuniyetini dile getirerek, Irak'ta etkili bütün siyasi kesimlerin dost ülke İran ile ilişkilerin geliştirilmesine önem verdiğini ifade etti.

Hekim, yabancı güçlerin Irak'tan çıkmasının bu ülkede siyasi istikrarına ve güvenliğine yardımcı olacağını kaydetti.

<http://www.mehrnews.com/tr/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1483177>

- **Bombs hit southern Iraq oil pipeline**



A damaged oil pipeline is seen a day after a bomb attack occurred in Rumaila oilfield in Basra province Oct. 8, 2011. (Reuters)

By AREF MOHAMMED

REUTERS BASRA

Three bombs hit an oil pipeline that transports crude from Iraq's southern oilfields to storage tanks around the oil hub of Basra on Tuesday, an oil police source said.

The impact on oil production or exports was not immediately clear, but firefighters were working to put out the blaze caused by the blast, the source who was at the explosion site said.

"The explosions happened in succession and caused an enormous fire," he said.

"We cannot go near the explosion site because the fire is still raging ... we fear the fire might extend to other nearby oil pipelines."

The source said the oil police were checking other pipelines for more bombs.

An oil official in Basra confirmed the blast was caused by a bomb attack. The pipeline was carrying crude to the Zubair 1 storage facility near Basra, the two sources said.

In early June, militants blew up a storage tank at the Zubair 1 storage facility, despite tight security.

Basra, which handles the bulk of Iraq's oil exports, has generally seen fewer attacks this year than other cities in the country following an overall decline in levels of violence since the peak of sectarian conflict in Iraq in 2006-07.

In October, two bombs hit pipeline networks transporting crude from Iraq's Rumaila oilfield, the country's biggest, cutting output from the field to 530,000 barrels per day from about 1.24 million bpd.

Iraq's oil police have stepped up patrols to protect installations against a possible surge in al Qaeda attacks as U.S. troops withdraw before Dec. 31, the head of the force said on Tuesday.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182451.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

## 2. İRAN / İRAN

- **İran ve Afganistan, savunma ve askeri işbirliğini geliştirmeye hazır olduklarını bildirdi**

İran İslam Cumhuriyeti ve Afganistan askeri ve savunma işbirliğini geliştirmeye hazır olduklarını bildirdiler.

İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri bakanı Ali Ekber Salihi, Afganistan savunma bakan yardımcısı Humayun Fevzi ile Tahran'da yaptığı görüşmede iki ülke askeri ve savunma işbirliği birinci ortak komisyonunun düzenlenmesini, Afganistan'ın istikrar ve güvenliğindeki İran'ın olumlu faaliyetlerinin devamı olarak niteleyerek, Tahran'ın Afganistan güçlerini eğitmek için savunma işbirliğine hazır olduğunu duyurdu.

Salihi, Amerikan casusluk aracının Afganistan topraklarından İran'a giriş yaptığını belirterek, İran silahlı kuvvetlerinin, ülke milli güvenliğini koruma hususunda ciddi olduğunu belirtti.

Salihi dış güçlerin bölgedeki askeri varlığını, bölgenin istikrarsızlığını temel nedeni olduğunu belirterek, Afganistan'da Amerika'nın askeri üss kurmasına Tahran'ın karşı olduğunu ifade etti.

Afganistan savunma bakan yardımcısı Humayun Fevzi de İran'ın 2. Bonn konferansına katılması ve savaş döneminde İran'ın yapmış olduğu yardımlardan dolayı şükranlarını sunarken,

İran ve Afganistan güvenliğinin bir birine bağlı olduğunu vurguladı.

Fevzi, Kabil'in İran'a yönelik saldırıya izin vermeyeceğinin altını çizerek, İran'ın askeri güç ve tecrübelerinin dikkate değer olduğunu ve bu alanlarda da ikili işbirliğinin artmasını istedi.

<http://www2.irna.ir/tr/news/view/line-120/1112147749122354.htm>

- **İhsanoğlu: İran'ın nükleer programı askeri değil**

FHA- İslam İşbirliği Kurumu Genel Sekreteri Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, İran'ın nükleer silah peşinde olduğunu ispat edecek hiç bir belge ve kanıt bulunmadığını vurguladı.

FHA- Doha konferansı kulisinde siyonist Haaretz gazetesine demeç veren İhsanoğlu, barışçıl nükleer enerjiden yararlanmanın İran'ın en doğal hakkı olduğunu belirterek, İran'a yönelik her türlü askeri müdahaleye karşı olduğunu belirtti.

İhsanoğlu, İran'ın nükleer silah peşinde olduğunu gösteren hiç bir belge ve kanıt bulunmadığını, hatta UAEK raporunda bile İran'ın nükleer programında sapma

olduğuna dair bir kanıt yer olmadığını vurguladı.

İran'ın barışçıl nükleer enerjiden yararlanma hakkına vurgu yapan İhsanoğlu, askeri müdahale İran'ın durumunu etkileyemeyeceğini ve sadece Irak ve Afganistan'da olduğu gibi vatandaşları olumsuz etkileyeceğini kaydetti.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007277328>

- **İran, Suriyeli muhalifleri Tahran'a çağırdı**

FHA- Suriye'de iç muhalefeti oluşturan "Muhalifler Milli Dayanışma Heyeti"nden bir yetkili, İran yönetiminin heyeti Tahran'a davet ettiğini ileri sürdü.

FHA- Adının açıklanmasını istemeyen söz konusu yetkili, İran Büyükelçiliğinin heyetle temasa geçtiğini ve kendilerini Tahran'a davet ettiğini ileri sürdü.

El-Kudüs El-Arabi gazetesine konuşan söz konusu yetkili, heyetin şu anda bu ziyaretin boyutlarını ve programını ve İran'da kimlerle görüşmeleri gerektiğini incelediklerini kaydetti.

Söz konusu yetkili, davetin İran Dışişleri Bakanlığı mı, yoksa Cumhurbaşkanlığı tarafından mı yapıldığını açıklamadı.

<http://turkish.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=9007277322>

- **Iran says 'not on the Agenda' to close Strait of Hormuz**



More than a third of the world's tanker oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a vital transit point. (File photo)

By AFP

TEHRAN

Iran on Wednesday deflated a rumor about it closing the Strait of Hormuz -- one of the world's most strategic transit points for oil -- by saying such a move was "not on the agenda."

But foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast reiterated Tehran's line hinting that the strait, a narrow stretch along Iran's Gulf shoreline, could be

threatened if current rising tensions ever spilled over into war.

"The Islamic republic has repeatedly said that the issue of closing the Strait of Hormuz is not on the agenda, because Iran believes the region must have peace and stability to allow all regional countries to advance and develop," Mehmanparast was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency.

However, he accused the United States and Israel of threatening Iran so as to create "a climate of war... and in such a climate there is the possibility of some reactions."

Oil prices spiked dramatically Tuesday -- ahead of an OPEC meeting in Vienna on Wednesday -- on an unfounded market rumor that Iran had closed or was looking at closing the Strait of Hormuz.

The rumor appeared to stem from a comment by an Iranian lawmaker who said Iran was "soon" to hold a military exercise on closing the strait.

"We will soon hold a drill to close down the Strait of Hormuz. Because if the world

tries to make the region insecure, then we will make the world insecure,” Parviz Sorouri, the head of the parliamentary national security committee, was quoted on Tuesday as saying by ISNA.

No Iranian official or media confirmed Sorouri’s announcement, which seemed to add to defiant posturing commonly heard from hardline lawmakers.

Mehmanparast addressed that issue, saying: “Certain people who do not have any official political position, such as lawmakers or representatives of a group of people, may declare their personal opinions. However, Iran announces its official stances through official political authorities.”

More than a third of the world’s tanker oil passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it a vital transit point. The United States maintains a navy presence in the Gulf to ensure it remains open.

Oil prices quickly returned to normal late Tuesday after the rumor was discounted.

New York’s main contract, light sweet crude for January delivery, fell 31 cents to

\$99.83 a barrel and Brent North Sea crude for January delivery was off 34 cents at \$109.16.

OPEC, which has Iran as its current rotating president, was expected Wednesday to maintain current official oil production quotas, with key members saying they were satisfied with current prices.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182539.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Senior adviser to Iran’s supreme leader says Turkey’s secularism not suitable for Arab states**



Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s forceful language followed threats last week from Israel that air strikes could be in the offing against Iran’s nuclear sites. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA  
DUBAI

Turkey's Western-like secular political structure is not suitable or compatible for Middle Eastern countries in the post-Arab Spring era, Ali-Akbar Velayati, senior adviser to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said at a news conference.

Turkey's model of "secular Islam" was a version of western liberal democracy and is unacceptable for countries that are going through what he said was an "Islamic awakening," the Financial Times reported Velayati as saying on Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, the Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, demanded an explanation from his Iranian counterpart, Ali Akbar Salehi, about a threatening statement made by an Iranian lawmaker, state-run Anatolia news agency reported.

"It is Iran's natural right to target the missile defense shield system in Turkey in case of an attack, and we will definitely resort to that," Hussein Ibrahim, the vice president of the Iranian parliamentary national security and foreign policy panel, reportedly said in an interview with the Iranian daily Shargh on Sunday.

The U.S. and its NATO allies are building an anti-ballistic missile in the Black Sea region, including the installation of NATO radar systems in Turkey and Romania.

But Salehi, who met with Davutoğlu in Jeddah on the sidelines of a gathering on Syria organized by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), said he does not share these views and that they don't reflect the official Iranian position.

Meanwhile, an Istanbul-based newspaper, Today's Zaman, reported that Iran's foreign ministry had given insurance to Turkey that the Islamic republic does not back such threats and that the threats do not reflect the ministry's policy.

The Iranian officials also emphasized that Turkey should acknowledge statements only from officials in charge, including the Iranian president and the foreign ministry.

Iran and Turkey have close trade and economic relations, as both countries are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization. It is thought that the bilateral relations between the nations are increasing. In 2005, their trade increased to \$4 billion from \$1 billion in 2000.

But both countries, which have long enjoyed collegial relations, are now going through a rough patch, aggravated by the tightening of sanctions against Iran.

During a visit to Turkey, the U.S. vice president, Joe Biden, called on Ankara to impose new sanctions against Iran. Biden also hailed Turkey's role in pressuring Syria to stop the bloody crackdown against protesters.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Iran's supreme leader told students at a Tehran military college that Iran "will respond with full force" to any attack – or even any threat of military action.

"The enemies, especially America and its stooges and the Zionist regime, should know that it is not Iran's custom to invade any country or nation. But it will respond with full force to any aggression or even threats in a way that will demolish the aggressors from within," he said, according to a statement on his official website.

Khamenei's forceful language followed threats last week from Israel that air strikes could be in the offing against Iran's

nuclear sites. The Israeli president, Shimon Peres, said last weekend that such action was becoming "more and more likely."

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182516.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Iran says it may move enrichment plants; Brzezinski warns attack would be 'disastrous'**



Iran's uranium enrichment plants will be moved to safer sites if Washington headed on a collision course with Tehran that could lead to a war. (File photo)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

Iran will move its uranium enrichment plants to safer sites if conditions make this necessary, a senior Revolutionary Guards commander said on Wednesday amid warnings of 'disastrous' consequences if Washington headed on a collision course with Tehran that could lead to a war.

Controversy over Iran's uranium enrichment program has resulted in Western powers imposing increasingly tight economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic, and Israel and the United States say they have not ruled out military action if diplomacy fails to persuade Tehran to suspend its sensitive nuclear work.

"If conditions require, we will move our uranium enrichment centers to safer places," the semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Brigadier General Gholamreza Jalali as saying.

Western powers suspect Iran is trying to acquire the ability to produce nuclear weapons. Iran denies this, saying it is enriching uranium only for peaceful purposes such as power generation and medical use, according to Reuters.

Israel, widely believed to have the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, says a nuclear-armed Iran would threaten its existence.

Meanwhile, a former advisor to ex-president Jimmy Carter warned that the United States appears headed on a

collision course with Iran that could lead to a war with 'disastrous' consequences.

"We think we are going to avoid war by moving towards compulsion," Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was national security advisor to Carter in the late 1970s, told an audience at an Atlantic Council think tank event in Washington late Tuesday.

"But the more you lean towards compulsion, the more the choice becomes war if it doesn't work. That narrows our options in a very dramatic way," said the former official, who remains an influential voice on U.S. foreign policy, according to AFP.

Brzezinski said he was concerned about an escalation in "rhetoric," as the U.S. approach to Iran's nuclear program appeared solely focused on forcing Tehran to comply with international demands, leaving Washington little flexibility.

"A lot of small decisions are being made which in the meantime narrow your freedom of choice in the future," he said.

Tuesday's gathering featured four former national security advisors, including

president Richard Nixon's powerful deputy Henry Kissinger.

Brzezinski warned repeatedly of his concerns that the United States could stumble into a war with Iran.

"If we slide into a conflict with Iran, in this or that fashion, the consequences for us will be disastrous, disastrous on a massive scale and also globally at the same time," he said.

Brzezinski was in office in 1979 when America's ally, the Shah of Iran, fell from power in a revolution that resulted in an Islamic theocracy in Tehran.

After the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Iran and the taking of American hostages that same year, Brzezinski presided over a plan to rescue the captives but the military operation failed before it got off the ground.

Tensions have steadily grown between Iran and the United States in recent months as Washington has pushed for stricter sanctions to punish Tehran over its nuclear activities and amid speculation Israel may be weighing possible pre-

emptive military action.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182515.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

### 3. ISRAEL - PALESTINE / İSRAİL – FİLİSTİN

#### • Filistin bayrağı ilk kez BM'de dalgalanıyor

Filistin'in, UNESCO'ya üye olması dolayısıyla Paris'te tören düzenlendi. Filistin Devlet Başkanı Mahmud Abbas, UNESCO tam üyeliğiyle ilgili olarak, "bugün, Filistin halkı için tarihi bir gün" dedi.



Filistin lideri Mahmud Abbas'ın da katıldığı törenin sonunda göndere Filistin bayrağı çekildi. Filistin, 31 Ekim'de düzenlenen oylama sonucunda UNESCO üyeliğine kabul edilmişti.

Filistin'in katılımıyla birlikte UNESCO'ya üye ülke sayısı 195'e çıktı. Filistin'in üyeliğine İsrail ile birlikte tepki gösteren

ABD, UNESCO bütçesine katkı payı ödemeyi durduracağını açıklamıştı.

ABD, UNESCO bütçesinin yüzde 22'sini karşılıyor. ABD'nin henüz 2011 yılı katkı payını da ödemiş olması nedeniyle 2012'de UNESCO bütçesinde 150 milyon dolarlık açık meydana gelmesi bekleniyor. Filistin, BM'e de tam üyelik için de başvurmuştu.

#### 'BUGÜN BİZİM İÇİN TARİHİ BİR GÜN'

Filistin Devlet Bakanı Mahmud Abbas, ülkesinin BM'nin UNESCO tam üyeliğiyle ilgili olarak, "Bugün, Filistin halkı için tarihi bir gün" dedi.

Abbas, Filistin'in üyeliği dolayısıyla Paris'te düzenlenen törenden sonra gazetecilere yaptığı açıklamada, UNESCO üyeliğinin diğer uluslararası örgütlere de tam üyeliğe örnek teşkil etmesini ümit ettiklerini söyledi.

UNESCO binasında yaptığı konuşmada Abbas, "Bugün bayrağımızın BM bünyesinde dalgalandığını görmek heyecan verici. Üyeliğimiz, gurur kaynağı. Medeniyetlerin bir araya geldiği toprak Filistin yeniden doğdu" diye konuştu.

#### 'FİLİSTİN'E HER TÜRLÜ DESTEĞİ VERECEĞİZ'

Abbas, "Ablukanın dayattığı zorluklara rağmen mirasımızı her zaman koruduk" ifadesini kullandı.

UNESCO Genel Direktörü İrina Bokova da örgüt olarak Filistin'e bilim, kültür ve eğitim alanında her türlü desteği verecekleri taahhüdünde bulundu.

"UNESCO üyeliğine hoşgeldiniz" diyen Bokova, İsrail ve Filistin'in barış için ortaya çıkan şansı kaçırmamaları gerektiğini söyledi. Bokova ve Abbas, üyelik dolayısıyla verilen resepsiyona katılacak.

<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25305644/>

#### • İsrail komşuyla gizli tatbikat yaptı

İsrail ile Yunanistan üç hafta önce İsrail'in güneyindeki Uvda askeri üssünde tatbikat yaptı. İki ülkenin ortak tatbikat yaptığını İsrail ordusu gizledi ancak tatbikat fotoğrafları, Yunanistan Hava Kuvvetleri'nin internet sitesinde yer aldı.

Komşu İsrail'le hava tatbikatı yaptı

İsrail ile Yunanistan üç hafta önce İsrail'in güneyindeki Uvda askeri üssünde tatbikat yaptı.

İsrail gazetesi Haaretz'de yer alan habere göre, İsrail, NATO'yla ilişkilerini güçlendirme çerçevesinde Yunanistan'la kasım ayı ortasında hava tatbikatı yaptı.

#### NAKLİYE UÇAKLARI DA TATBİKATTA YER ALDI

İsrail'in güneyindeki Uvda üssünde gerçekleşen beş günlük tatbikata Yunanistan 5 adet F-16 savaş uçağıyla katıldı. İsrail ise, tatbikatta F-15 ve F-16'ların yanı sıra hava kuvvetleri bünyesindeki Boeing tipi nakliye uçaklarıyla katıldı.

Gazetenin haberine göre, İsrail söz konusu tatbikatla ilgili olarak basına bilgi vermekten kaçındı. Uvda üssündeki hava tatbikatını İsrail basını da Yunan Hava Kuvvetleri'nin internet sayfasında yayınladığı fotoğraflardan öğrendi.

#### İTALYA'YLA DA TATBİKAT

İsrail son dönemde bölgedeki yabancı ülkelerle askeri tatbikatlara hız verdi. Tel Aviv'in önümüzdeki birkaç gün içinde İtalyan Hava Kuvvetleri'yle İsrail'in güneyinde ortak bir hava tatbikatı yapması bekleniyor.

<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25305537/>

#### • Filistin İçin Tarihi Bir Gün

"Bugün, Filistin halkı için tarihi bir gün" dedi.

Filistin Devlet Bakanı Mahmud Abbas, ülkesinin BM'nin Eğitim, Bilim ve Kültür Örgütü'ne (Unesco) tam üyeliğiyle ilgili olarak,

"Bugün, Filistin halkı için tarihi bir gün" dedi.

Abbas, Filistin'in üyeliği dolayısıyla Paris'te düzenlenen törenden sonra gazetecilere yaptığı açıklamada, Unesco üyeliğinin diğer uluslararası örgütlere de tam üyeliğe örnek teşkil etmesini ümit ettiklerini söyledi.

Unesco binasında yaptığı konuşmada Abbas, "Bugün bayrağımızın BM bünyesinde dalgalandığını görmek heyecan verici. Üyeliğimiz, gurur kaynağı. Medeniyetlerin bir araya geldiği toprak Filistin yeniden doğdu" diye konuştu.

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- PARİS

(Anadolu Ajansı)

<http://www.haberler.com/filistin-icin-tarihi-bir-gun-3188561-haberi/>

- **Israeli premier vows action against settlers who attack soldiers**



Israeli soldiers detain an activist during clashes in the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh, near Ramallah. (Reuters)

By AFP

JERUSALEM

Israel's premier vowed on Tuesday to act harshly against extremist Jews who attack security forces, after radical settlers attacked an army base and stoned a senior officer.

"I will fight this phenomenon with all my force until it is eliminated," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said at a ceremony, in remarks relayed in a statement.

Netanyahu noted he met the heads of the security and legal establishment, and

tasked them with presenting him a “heavy-handed” plan within a week to combat this “calamity.”

“I believe bad things should be stopped when they are small. This is small, and we will stop it now, and not let anyone act violently against Israeli soldiers or police,” Netanyahu said.

Early on Tuesday morning, around 50 settlers forced their way onto a key army base in the northern West Bank, stoned the jeep of a senior officer and vandalized military vehicles following rumors troops were about to evacuate settlement outposts, the military said.

Several hours earlier, some 30 settlers broke into a Christian baptismal site in a closed military zone along the Jordanian border to stage a protest.

An army statement said the early morning attack had targeted the Ephraim base near the northern town of Qalqilya.

“Overnight, approximately 50 rightwing activists infiltrated the Ephraim regional division headquarters, set fire to tires and damaged vehicles with stones, bottles of

paint and by placing nails on the road,” it said.

“In addition, rocks were thrown at the Ephraim regional division commander’s vehicle. The commander was not injured,” it said, condemning the attack.

Police said two people were arrested after the attack which came amid rumors reportedly circling in the settler community that troops were poised to dismantle several outposts set up without government permission.

In the earlier incident, settler activists broke into the Qasr al-Yahud Christian baptismal site along the Jordan border to protest against Muslim opposition to the closure of a controversial ramp leading to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem’s Old City.

Seventeen people were detained for questioning, police said.

The two incidents were the latest in a slew of revenge attacks by settlers, which for the most part targeted Palestinian and Arab property, but have also been

directed at leftwing Israeli activists and the military.

These so-called “price-tag” attacks, usually carried out in response to steps against settlements, have been condemned by Israeli leaders, but the Palestinians say little action has been taken to prosecute those responsible.

Defense Minister Ehud Barak lambasted the perpetrators for their “nefarious actions” which he said had no place in Israeli society.

“These activities have the characteristic of homegrown terror and will not be tolerated. The defense minister has instructed the IDF to act with resolve in all of its efforts to curb this worrying bout of activity,” he said in a statement.

Opposition leader Tzipi Livni said the incidents were symptomatic of the “radicalization” of Israeli society with “the tacit agreement and a wink from the Netanyahu government,” while Home Front Security Minister Matan Vilnai called it a case of Jewish terrorism.

“These are criminals, Jewish terrorists who are attacking the security of Israel... They are fighting the IDF which is protecting them,” Vilnai told army radio.

The army urged local council heads and rabbis in the settler community to take a stand against such incidents.

“Violence that targets the IDF and its soldiers... is seen as extremely severe.”

Danny Dayan, head of the Yesha settlers council, also spoke out against the violence, calling it “unacceptable, shameful” in a statement which also said those responsible “must be arrested and brought to justice.”

It was not the first time settlers have targeted the army. Two months ago, settlers attacked a group of soldiers on patrol near Ramallah in an incident which was also reportedly linked to rumors that troops were about to dismantle an unauthorized settler outpost.

A month earlier, 13 army vehicles were vandalized and sprayed with Hebrew graffiti in an attack just days after troops

dismantled three structures in the nearby Migron outpost.

The move sparked an angry response from both Netanyahu and Barak, who vowed to apprehend the perpetrators.

So far, no one has been arrested.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182524.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Israel reopens controversial access ramp to Jerusalem's al-Aqsa compound**



A view shows the Mughrabi ramp leading from the plaza by the Western Wall to the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. (AFP)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

Israel reopened a controversial wooden access ramp to Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque compound on Wednesday, two days after its closure on safety grounds sparked Muslim anger.

"It was opened this morning," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld told AFP. "It's been opened as normal for visitors, both Christian and Jewish."

He said a fire engine had been stationed nearby and other unspecified safety precautions implemented, after an inspection by a city engineer.

On Monday, Israel closed the Mughrabi access ramp over public safety concerns.

The Jerusalem municipality, which had ordered the ramp's closure, had said "the government's decision to fortify the bridge and fix its safety shortcomings, in accordance with the city's engineer's orders, ensures the municipality's preliminary demands to ensure the safety of those using the bridge."

The municipality also expressed "regret" over the government's ongoing failure to deal with the "ugly and dilapidated hazard in the heart of the Western Wall and entrance to the Temple Mount."

The Israeli decision to renovate rather than demolish the Mughrabi walkway was

understood to be a move to prevent a crisis with Jordan, which is custodian of the Waqf and is responsible for Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem.

Amman has frequently spoken out against removal of the ramp, which is one of the 15 gates leading into the al-Aqsa mosque compound, 10 of which are in use.

The Mughrabi Gate is the only access for non-Muslims to enter the site, meaning its closure will prevent both Jews and tourists from visiting until a replacement structure is built.

The ramp leads from the plaza by the Western Wall, the most sacred site at which Jews can pray, up to the adjoining compound, known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif, which houses the al-Aqsa mosque.

The wooden ramp in Jerusalem was erected by Israeli authorities as a stopgap after a snowstorm and earthquake in 2004 damaged a stone bridge leading up from Judaism's Western Wall to the sacred compound where the al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine stand.

Any construction at the site can be politically explosive. During Benjamin Netanyahu's first term as prime minister, his opening in 1996 of a new entrance to an access tunnel for tourists near the compound touched off Muslim protests and gun battles in which 60 Palestinians and 15 Israelis were killed.

The footbridge was to have been torn down last month but Netanyahu postponed the demolition on the advice of Israeli diplomats and security officials, government officials said, according to Reuters.

Netanyahu was cautioned that removing the structure and building a new bridge could enrage Muslims, especially in turbulent Egypt, who might believe the work could damage al-Aqsa, said the officials, who insisted no harm would come to existing buildings.

Israeli media reports said Israel would consult with the king of Jordan, the custodian of Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem, on the future of the bridge.

The city's senior Muslim cleric, Sheikh Mohammad Hussein, the mufti of

Jerusalem, said Islamic religious authorities opposed demolition of the existing structure and construction of a new one.

The holy compound is in the old walled city of Jerusalem, an area Israel captured along with the West Bank in a 1967 war and annexed in a step that has not won international recognition. Palestinians want the area to be part of a state they intend to create in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Jews revere the compound as the site of their Biblical Temple, destroyed by Roman troops in the 1st century. Surviving foundations of its Western Wall are now a focus of prayer.

For Muslims, who captured Jerusalem from the Christian Byzantines in the 7th century, the Dome of the Rock marks the spot from which the Prophet Mohammed made his night journey to heaven.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182523.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Barak: Israel must treat Jewish extremists like a terror group**

Defense Minister's comments come as Justice Minister Ne'eman forms list of possible legal measures against rightist violence, including emergency arrests.

Israel needs to see if the actions of right-wing extremist could be legally defined as terror, Defense Minister Ehud Barak said on Wednesday, as Justice Minister Yaakov Ne'eman weighed emergency measures in the wake of recent price tag attacks and assaults on IDF troops.

Barak's comments came after some 50 settlers and right-wing activists entered a key West Bank military base on Tuesday, throwing rocks, burning tires, and vandalizing military vehicles.



Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

Photo by: Michal Fattal

In an apparent price -tag attack earlier Wednesday, anonymous

perpetrators set a historical Jerusalem mosque alight, spray painting phrases such as "Muhammad is dead" and "Muhammad is a pig" on its walls.

Also on Wednesday, Justice Minister Ne'eman is expected to form a list of proposals geared at toughening legal actions against right-wing activists and in the wake of recent price tag attacks.

Ne'eman is to discuss the matter with Justice Ministry officials and police representatives. One option on the table is the declaration of right-wing extremists as a terror organization, which would enable immediate arrests and prevention actions.

Referring to a recent resurgence of right-wing violence, Barak said in an interview with Army Radio on Wednesday that Israel needs to see if the so-called hilltop youth, a group of young people who were born in the settlements and who belong to the extreme right, could be designated as a terror organization.

"From the way they conduct themselves, there's no question that this is terror behavior," Barak told Army Radio, saying

that the need to define it in legal terms is in essence a problem of wording: "Is it an organization, is a collection of individuals, how can be define them collectively?"

However, Barak added, Israel had to "act fast, so both they and the rest of the normative community in the West Bank, which is the majority of the population, won't be left in doubt."

"These things endanger peoples' lives and divert the IDF from its main mission, which is to prepare itself for the [security] challenges and defend the lives of civilians, including residents of the West Bank," the defense minister added.

Barak also stressed that the hilltop youth represented a threat "to the very delicate fiber of our relations with our neighbors. I'm certain that we need to take any step necessary, including emergency legislation, expulsions, and administrative arrests.

"We need to take care of the Jewish terror like we handle the country's crime syndicates," Barak added.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/barak-israel-must-treat-jewish-extremists-like-a-terror-group-1.401364>

- **IDF soldiers should have shot rioting Jewish extremists, MK says**

Former Defense Minister Ben-Eliezer responds to infiltration of dozens of right-wing activists into West Bank army base; Tzipi Livni: This is a struggle for Israel's character.

By Haaretz

Israeli soldiers should have shot right-wing rioters while they assaulted army personnel, Labor MK and former Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer said on Wednesday.

Ben-Eliezer's comments came after some 50 settlers and right-wing activists entered a key West Bank military base early Tuesday morning and threw rocks, burned tires, and vandalized military vehicles. Right-wing activists also assaulted a top Israel Defense Forces officer.



Benjamin Ben-Eliezer

Photo by: Moti Milrod

The settlers were acting in response to a rumor that the IDF would act to evict a West Bank settlement in accordance with an August Supreme Court ruling.

Referring to the incident on Wednesday, Ben-Eliezer, said that a "gang of criminals took a brick, slammed it in the [IDF officer's] face and nearly killed him. It's a sham that no one was arrested, it's a shame that no one fired, that no one responded."

"What happened yesterday is terror, pure and simple, terror," the former minister said, adding: "I don't differentiate between Jew and Arab when someone's trying to kill you."

Opposition Leader and Kadiman chairperson Tzipi Livni also referred to recent attacks, saying that there was a direct link "between the exclusion of

women from the public sphere and assaults on army officers and the burning down of mosques."

"This is an ideological wave that wishes to institute a different country here with a world view that forces something that is unrelated to a Jewish tradition on a secular majority," Livni said, adding: "This is nothing less than a struggle for the nation's character sponsored by [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's silence."

Earlier Wednesday, arsonists set fire to a deserted mosque in central Jerusalem, also a noted Muslim historical site. There was no structural damage reported and the damage mainly consisted of the blackening of walls and graffiti reading "Price Tag," and anti-Islamic phrases.

<http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/idf-soldiers-should-have-shot-rioting-jewish-extremists-mk-says-1.401370>

## 4. AFRICA and EGYPT / AFRİKA ve MISİR

- **Sudan conflict severely affecting 250,000 people: U.N.**



Fighting in the border state of South Kordofan first erupted in early June and the conflict spilled over three months later into the nearby Blue Nile state. (Reuters)

By AFP

KHARTOUM

The United Nations said on Tuesday a quarter of a million people have been severely affected by the conflict in Sudan's southern border states to which the government continues to deny the world body access.

"We... consider that there are about a quarter of a million people who have been severely affected" by the fighting in Blue Nile and South Kordofan, Mark Cutts, the U.N. humanitarian agency (OCHA)'s head of office in Sudan, told reporters in Khartoum.

“Our main concern is for populations that are completely cut off from any relief supplies coming in from outside,” he added.

Fighting in the border state of South Kordofan first erupted in early June, just weeks before the formal independence of the south, between the Sudanese army and fighters aligned to the SPLA, the ex-southern rebels turned regular army of South Sudan.

The conflict spilled over three months later into nearby Blue Nile state, another peripheral area where Khartoum moved to assert its authority in the wake of southern secession.

Cutts listed severe disruptions to the farming cycle – which is driving the region’s growing food insecurity – as well as interruptions to basic services such as hospitals, health centers and schools, as examples of the conflict’s social impact.

The U.N. children’s fund (UNICEF) said in a separate report that cultivation levels in some areas were only 23 percent of those in previous years and that the

“devastating impact on civilians – many of them children” was as keenly felt as ever.

“Food shortages and worsening nutrition levels seem certain to have a negative impact on morbidities and mortalities among children,” UNICEF said.

It added that more than 50 youngsters were reported killed or wounded by aerial bombardment or crossfire.

Despite concerns about the worsening humanitarian situation, the Sudanese government has barred international aid workers, including all U.N. agencies, from accessing the region, a problem highlighted on Tuesday by the acting U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Sudan.

“We are in no position to verify the actual needs on the ground or the fulfillment of those needs as we are simply not there,” Peter de Clercq said.

“The only thing that we can say with some confidence is that... we are looking at a deteriorating humanitarian situation in the areas out of which” the refugees in neighbouring South Sudan and Ethiopia

have fled, both in terms of food and health, he added.

A Sudanese government official at the same news conference insisted that humanitarian workers are barred from the conflict zone for their own safety.

“Still there is fighting, still there is warring, there is kidnapping,” said Mohammed Fadallah, acting humanitarian affairs commissioner.

“The government is doing its best to provide humanitarian assistance.”

De Clercq said the U.N. humanitarian chief Valerie Amos was due to visit Sudan on Monday, to discuss “once again” the issue of humanitarian access to the war-torn southern states.

More than 80,000 Sudanese have now fled across Sudan’s southern border since the conflict began, according to OCHA, while 417,000 remain displaced within South Kordofan and Blue Nile, mostly in areas controlled by the SPLA-North.

Meanwhile the fighting continues unabated.

A rebel spokesman said on Monday that heavy clashes in the Talodi area of South Kordofan over the weekend left at least 19 government troops dead.

The Sudanese army has also carried out cross-border attacks on areas it says are retreat positions of the northern rebels, who Khartoum has long accused the south of providing with weapons and other supplies. Juba denies the claims.

Last month, a Sudanese army aircraft bombed the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan’s Unity state, which houses more than 20,000 South Kordofan refugees, causing international outrage.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182526.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Egypt’s Islamists face tough battle with remnants of Mubarak’s NDP in 2nd round of vote**



Voting will take place over two days and a run-off being held a week later. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

The second round of Egypt's first post-Mubarak parliamentary polls is taking place on Wednesday and Thursday amid expectations of an unprecedentedly high voter turnout.

The second round will cover nine of Egypt's 27 governorates, including Giza, Beni Sweif, Sohag, Aswan, Menoufiya, Sharqiya, Beheira, Ismailia and Suez.

Some 18.8 million Egyptians are eligible to cast their ballots in this round of the first legislative polls since a popular uprising ended Hosni Mubarak's 30-year-rule in February.

Remnants of Mubarak's now-defunct National Democratic Party (NDP) are expected to constitute the primary counterweight to Islamist parties in the second round.

In line with the Constitutional Declaration issued in March, 4,589 polling stations will be put under the direct supervision of almost 10,000 judges, according to Egypt's al-Ahram daily.

In Wednesday's contest, a total of 3,387 candidates (compared to 3,200 in the first stage) will compete for 180 parliamentary seats (compared to 168 seats contested in the first stage).

According to figures issued by the Cabinet Information Decision Support Centre (IDSC), 2,271 candidates will compete for 60 seats reserved for independent candidates, while 1,116 candidates will vie for 120 seats reserved for party lists.

Some 355,000 Egyptians living abroad have also registered to vote in the second round, with most living in Arab Gulf countries, according to the IDSC.

Islamists who swept to victory in the first stage of the country's parliamentary elections were looking to consolidate their winning streak in the second round of voting.

The election's first stage on Nov. 28 saw Islamist parties crush their liberal rivals, mirroring a pattern established in Tunisia and Morocco following a string of popular uprisings across the region.

Parties affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-conservative Salafi movements won 65 percent of all votes, trouncing liberal parties who managed 29.3 percent, according to AFP.

The Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) said it won 32 out of 56 individual seats contested in the first phase of the multi-stage parliamentary polls, with four seats going to party allies.

In a separate party vote, which will see more than 100 seats distributed, the FJP won 36.6 percent while the hardline Islamic fundamentalist party al-Nour came second with 24.4 percent.

The Muslim Brotherhood had been widely forecast to triumph as the country's most organized political group, well known after decades of charitable work and its endurance through repeated crackdowns by the Mubarak regime.

But the good showing from Salafist groups was a surprise, raising fears of a more conservative and overtly religious 498-member new parliament.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been at pains to stress its commitment to multi-party democracy, inclusiveness and civil liberties, while also advocating the application of sharia law.

Nevertheless, the prospect of an Islamist-dominated parliament raises fears among liberals about religious freedom in a country with the Middle East's largest Christian minority.

Much remains unclear about how the new parliament will function and whether it will be able to resolve a stand-off with the armed forces over how much power they will retain under a new constitution to be written next year.

After the voting for the lower house of parliament, which will end in January, Egyptians will then elect an upper house in a further three rounds of polls.

The largest number of FJP candidates are concentrated in rural governorates of the Nile Delta, including Beheira (30 candidates) and Sharqiya and Menoufiya (56 candidates together). While Beheira and Sharqiya are both considered historical Brotherhood strongholds, FJP

candidates there are nevertheless expected to face stiff competition from holdovers of Mubarak's now-defunct NDP.

In the Menoufiya Governorate, for example, in which the families of Mubarak and his predecessor, late president Anwar Sadat, boast a significant presence, FJP candidates are expected to face an uphill battle, according to a report carried by al-Ahram on Wednesday.

In the Upper Egyptian governorate of Sohag, meanwhile, tribal and family affiliations are expected to work against the FJP. Sohag, notably, is home to a large number of former NDP members.

The same can be said of the Upper Egyptian governorates of Aswan and Beni Sueif, where the dismantled NDP remains a force to be reckoned with.

Voting will take place over two days and a run-off being held a week later.

Run-off elections are slated for Dec. 21 and 22.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182502.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Tunisia's president vows to uphold revolution**

Moncef Marzouki pays tribute to those who died in country's uprising and pledges to be "faithful to the martyrs".

Tunisia's new president Moncef Marzouki has been sworn in in front of the country's constituent assembly as the nation turned a new page nearly a year after the uprising that toppled Zine el Abidine Ben Ali in the first of the so-called "Arab Spring" revolutions.

"I will be the guarantor of the national interests, the state of laws and institutions. I will be faithful to the martyrs and to the objectives of the revolution," Marzouki said as he took the oath of office on Tuesday morning with his hand on the Quran.

Wearing a burnous, a long traditional woollen cloak, he solemnly promised to be president of all Tunisians and to do everything he could to improve the living standard of his compatriots.

He paid homage to those who died during the uprising against former president Ben Ali a year ago.

"Without their sacrifice, I wouldn't be here in this place," the former activist said with tears in his eyes.

Al Jazeera's Hashem Ahelbarra, reporting from the capital Tunis, said the speech was "very emotional".

"It was a historic moment that Tunisians will remember for generations to come," he said.

Marzouki outlined the blueprint of the government and political institutions, adding: "We're committed to democracy and we're going to help our friends in Syria and Yemen," said our correspondent.

He was elected with 153 votes in the 217-member constituent assembly, with three of the 202 deputies present voting against, two abstaining and 44 opposition members casting blank ballots.

In depth coverage of first Arab Spring vote  
The finance minister in Tunisia's new coalition government will be nominated by a left-leaning party while the Islamist Ennahdha party will hold the foreign affairs and interior portfolios, two

coalition sources told the Reuters news agency.

They said Ennahdha and its two smaller coalition partners had agreed that the finance ministry would go to the left-wing Ettakatol party. The name of the candidate was not confirmed.

The sources said Ennahdha official and former political prisoner Ali Larayedh would be interior minister, and Ennahdha's Rafik Abdesslem, an analyst with Al Jazeera, would be foreign minister.

Abdesslem is married to one of the daughters of Ennahdha's leader, Rachid Ghannouchi.

Human rights advocate

Marzouki, a French-trained doctor, headed the Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LTDH) from 1989 until he was forced out of the country in 1994.

An admirer of India's independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, he travelled to that country as well as South Africa after its transition from apartheid to democracy.

A prolific writer, he has penned several books in French and Arabic including one titled "Dictators on Watch: A Democratic Path for the Arab World."

Marzouki's first order of business will be to name the prime minister, with Hamadi Jebali, the number two of the moderate Islamist Ennahdha party, expected to get the nod.

Critics accuse Marzouki of being a pawn of Ennahdha, the Islamist party which came in first in the October 23 constituent assembly elections with 89 seats.

Marzouki's Congress Party for the Republic, whose symbol is a pair of red glasses inspired by his giant spectacles, was second, winning 29 seats.

His election came two days after the assembly adopted a provisional constitution allowing the country to name a government.

The vote came after five days of often tumultuous debate which saw hundreds of people demonstrating outside the assembly building shouting slogans demanding "Freedom and dignity".

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/12/201112139233572166.html>

## 5. JORDAN and LEBANON / ÜRDÜN

### • Mikati discusses recent attack with UNIFIL commander

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Najib Mikati Wednesday met with UNIFIL commander Maj. Gen. Alberto Asarta Cuevas to discuss the recent attack on French peacekeepers, which Mikati said was aimed at harming relations with France.

"Targeting the French contingent is aimed at harming the relationship between Lebanon and France which has always stood beside Lebanon under all circumstances," Mikati told Asarta during the meeting at the Grand Serail, according to his press office.

Mikati also said Lebanon was committed to cooperating with UNIFIL, whose "duty is to strengthen security and stability in the south and assist the Lebanese Army in carrying out its duties in extending its authority of all Lebanese territories."

A roadside bomb Friday hit a UNIFIL vehicle carrying French peacekeepers, wounding five. It was the second attack

targeting French forces and the third against UNIFIL this year.

Although Paris had warned after the first attack this year that it would downsize its contingent if further attacks occurred, French officials recently said their country would wait until a current strategic review by the U.N. is complete before making a final decision.

During the meeting, Mikati reiterated his condemnation of the attack which he said represented a suspicious attempt to disrupt the existing stability in the south.

The prime minister also renewed his call for the international community and the U.N. to support the Lebanese Army logistically and implement international resolutions

“This attack does not affect our commitment to the role of the international forces in supporting Lebanon and aiding the Lebanese Army in strengthening stability,” he added.

Asarta made no official statements after the meeting, but said that he had

discussed with Mikati the attack on UNIFIL and the general situation in the south.

Mikati also touched upon Israel’s continued violations of international resolutions related to Lebanon and the Middle East, saying that they were no longer acceptable given that the Jewish State’s behavior has serious implications for the entire region.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2011/Dec-14/156858-mikati-discusses-recent-attack-with-unifil-commander.ashx#axzz1gVcgXoTm>

## 6. SYRIA / SURİYE

- **Syria’s death toll from violent crackdown rises sharply as U.N. action urged**



Syrians living in Jordan shout slogans against President Bashar al-Assad, during a demonstration in front of the Syrian embassy in Amman. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

Six people were killed early on Wednesday near the Syrian city of Hama after their car was hit by a mortar shell, Al Arabiya reported citing activists at the Syrian Coordination Committees. The new deaths raise the death toll of violent crackdown on protesters within the past 24 hours to 47 people, mostly in Idlib, Al Arabiya said.

The bloodshed in the northern province of Idlib, which borders Turkey, highlighted the accelerating violence in Syria where an insurgency has begun to overshadow what started as peaceful street protests against President Bashar al-Assad's 11-year rule.

Syrian activist Ammar Qurabi told Al Arabiya that a road map has already been planned for establishing safe corridors on the Syrian-Turkish borders. He said that the Turkish government was only waiting for an Arab and regional cover to apply the planned road map. "However, as more civilians are killed in Syria, Turkey might ask for a cover from the NATO," he said.

The United Nations' Navi Pillay said the death toll was 1,000 higher than an estimate she released 10 days earlier. It

includes civilians, army defectors and those executed for refusing to shoot civilians, but not soldiers or security personnel killed by opposition forces, she said, according to Reuters.

The Syrian government has said more than 1,100 members of the army, police and security services have been killed and state media reported 17 military funerals on Tuesday for victims of "terrorist armed groups."

Pillay said Syria's actions could constitute crimes against humanity, issuing a fresh call for the U.N. Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said:

"The situation is totally unacceptable. The brutal repression of civilians must stop. Assad must listen to his people, to his neighbors, to the Arab partners, to Europe, to the world. We all have the same message: he should stop the violence against his own people and let the transition begin."

The sharp rise in the death toll is bound to lend weight to those arguing for increased international intervention to stop the bloodshed in Syria which some fear is increasingly drifting towards civil war.

Assad, 46, whose minority Alawite family has held power over majority Sunni Muslim Syria for four decades, faces the most serious challenge to his rule from the turmoil which erupted in the southern city of Deraa on March 18.

A violent security crackdown failed to halt the unrest -- inspired by popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya -- which turned bloodier in the last few months as defecting soldiers join armed civilians in fighting back in some areas.

Mutineers from Syria's regular army have banded together to set up the Free Syrian Army. Its gunmen have been active in the city of Homs to try to counter pro-Assad snipers who residents say attempt to intimidate the population into submission.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told Reuters that army deserters attacked a convoy carrying security forces, killing at least seven people. There was no

immediate report from state media of the attack, but the SANA news agency said security forces killed several members of an "armed terrorist group" in Idlib.

SANA also said border guards foiled an attempt by "an armed terrorist group" to cross into Syria from Turkey on Monday, the second such reported incident in a week. It said they shot dead two of the 15-strong group.

Syria has barred most independent journalists, making it hard to assess conflicting accounts of events there.

According to briefing notes seen by Reuters in New York, Pillay said that "independent, credible and corroborated accounts demonstrate that ... abuses have taken place as part of a widespread and systematic attack on civilians."

More than 14,000 people were reportedly in detention, at least 12,400 had sought refuge in neighboring countries and tens of thousands had been internally displaced, she said, also citing "alarming reports" of moves against the city of Homs.

Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said he too was troubled by Pillay's report, but said outside intervention could lead to civil war and a far higher death toll.

He repeated accusations that Western countries had gone into "regime-change mode," adding, "the tragedy is that if things were allowed to degenerate and to go in the direction of further provocation, of fanning further confrontation, then maybe (there would be) hundreds of thousands dead."

Russia joined China to block Western efforts to pass a resolution against Syria in the U.N. Security Council.

The Security Council meeting came as Western nations ramp up pressure to condemn Assad's campaign.

"Frankly we think that it is past time for the U.N. Security Council to speak up," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters, denouncing Security Council silence on the Syrian regime as "unconscionable," according to AFP.

"And we are again calling on our partners on the Security Council to be willing to take action and speak out for the innocents in Syria who are suffering at the hands of the regime, including Russia," Nuland said.

Her comments echoed earlier remarks from German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, who said council members resisting action against Damascus needed to "change their mind."

France's U.N. envoy Gerard Araud said the council was "morally responsible" for the daily deaths by staying silent.

Syrian Ambassador Bashar Jaafari said Pillay should never have appeared before the council for a session that was part of a "huge conspiracy concocted against Syria from the beginning."

Syria held municipal elections on Monday, portrayed by Assad's government as part of a process leading to a parliamentary election next year and constitutional reform. But critics say local elections have little meaning in a country where power is highly centralized.

Assad has said reforms cannot be rushed in Baathist-ruled Syria, which is a close ally of Iran, a key player in nearby Lebanon and supporter of militant anti-Israel groups.

Russia said Western accusations that it was blocking U.N. action condemning the crackdown were “immoral” because the West was refusing to put pressure on armed rebel groups.

“There are those who refuse to put pressure on the armed, extremist part of the opposition and are at the same time accusing us of blocking the U.N. Security Council’s work. I would call this position immoral,” Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in televised comments.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182489.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Citizens Gather at al-Hijaz and the Governorate Squares Rejecting Arab League and Western Sanctions**

DAMASCUS, (SANA)-Hundreds of Syrian citizens gathered at al-Hijaz and the Governorate squares in Damascus on Tuesday rejecting the Arab League resolutions and the policy of sanctions

adopted by the western countries against Syria.

The citizens underlined their commitment to the national unity and independent national decision, showing support to the comprehensive reform program under the leadership of President Bashar al-Assad.

In statements to SANA, participants in the gatherings said they came to Damascus main squares to reject the policy of sanctions that affect all Syrian people, stressing that the Syrians will not respond to foreign calls and will defend the Homeland because Syria has always been immune due to its people's commitment to national unity.

<http://sana.sy/eng/337/2011/12/14/388053.htm>

- **Safar, Nikzad Review Outcomes of Syrian-Iranian Follow-up Committee for Economic Cooperation**

DAMASCUS, (SANA) – Prime Minister, Adel Safar, on Wednesday underlined the close Syrian-Iranian relations during his meeting with Iranian Minister of Transportation and Urban Development, Ali Nikzad.

Premier Safar highlighted the strong ties binding the two countries and the mutual keenness to develop and upgrade relations in a way that serves the two peoples and pushes development process forwards and supports the two countries' stances in the face of the conspiracy.

For his part, the Iranian Minister underlined his country's standing with Syria and its support to the Syrian economy and stances in confronting the conspiracy targeting Syria's resistance-backing stances in the region.

The two sides reviewed the results of the Syrian-Iranian Follow-up Committee for Economic Cooperation and what has been agreed on in this regard.

They discussed means of strengthening economic relations through increasing the trade exchange volume and implementing investment and development projects, particularly in the fields of energy, technology, manufacturing and others.

<http://sana.sy/eng/21/2011/12/14/388174.htm>

- **Results of Local Council Elections in Damascus and Sweida Announced**

DAMASCUS, (SANA)- The judicial sub-committee for the Local Council Elections in Damascus on Tuesday evening announced the results of the Provincial Council elections.

Advisor, Nazir Kheirallah, head of the sub-committee, said the electoral process went according to the committee's plan in an atmosphere of transparency marked by honesty and democracy.

"The wide popular participation in the voting reflected the citizens' desire in effective participation in the reform process," added Kheirallah, highlighting the big turnout of youth, whether candidates and voters, in the elections.

Meanwhile, Judge m'an Sarai-Eddin, head of the judicial sub-committee in charge of supervising the elections in the southern governorate of Sweida, announced the results, noting that the total number of voters reached 98,000, making a percentage of 80 %.

He said that the elections were properly held under a transparent atmosphere, stressing that no violations were reported.

<http://sana.sy/eng/21/2011/12/14/388106.htm>

- **Russia Supports Internal Dialogue in Syria, Rejects Ultimatums Language**

MOSCOW/ NEW YORK, (SANA)- Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, renewed on Tuesday his country's rejection of using the language of ultimatums in dealing with Syria by the Arab League (AL).

Lavrov stressed that dialogue is the only way to reach a solution to the situation in Syria.

At a press conference with his Algerian counterpart, Murad Medelci, in Moscow, Lavrov pointed out that the armed groups in Homs province are bombarding military units, government buildings and hospitals in the city to create a human catastrophe and make a pretext for foreign interference.

He stressed his country's rejection of any sanctions against Syria, clarifying that sanctions would give opposite results.

Lavrov said that his country is ready to send observers to Syria, pointing out to

the possibility of sending observers from the BRICS countries.

In the same context, Russia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Vitaly Churkin, stressed that the Western countries are adopting incorrect stances regarding finding solution to the Syrian crisis as they are hindering internal dialogue in Syria.

During a UN Security Council session dedicated to discuss the situation in Syria, Churkin warned against the dangerous stances of the Western countries which seek to "change the regime" in Syria and hinder holding dialogue between Syria and the AL.

He pointed out that the tragic developments in Syria in the past few months caused deep concern inside the UN Security Council.

It's worth mentioning that Russia presides the Security Council during the current month.

Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia: We will not pass any Resolution that includes Using Force against Syria

Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Gennady Gatilov underlined that his country will not pass any new resolution against Syria whether it will directly or indirectly refer to any possibility of using force or military intervention, saying "Russia doesn't see any bases to refer the Syrian issue to the International Criminal Court."

"Russia's stance on the draft resolution prepared by the Western countries against Syria is well known... Russia considers this draft resolution as unbalanced and includes unilateral accusations against the Syrian authorities, it takes no consideration the destructive acts of the armed opposition," Gatilov said in a statement.

He added that Russia sees the evaluation of the Higher Commission of the Human Rights submitted to the UN Security Council as expressing a personal viewpoint because "We have no confidence in the existence of evidence on the information presented, they were based on emotional evaluations."

<http://sana.sy/eng/22/2011/12/14/387891.htm>

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

### • Suudi Kralı Abdullah Kabinede Değişiklikler Yaptı

Suudi Arabistan Kralı Abdullah Bin Abdülaziz El-Suud'un emri doğrultusunda, dün akşam saatlerinde Hac, Ekonomi ve Planlama, Kamu Hizmetleri ile Sanayi ve Ticaret Bakanları değiştirildi.

Suudi Arabistan Kralı Abdullah Bin Abdülaziz El-Suud'un emri doğrultusunda, dün akşam saatlerinde Hac, Ekonomi ve Planlama, Kamu Hizmetleri ile Sanayi ve Ticaret Bakanları değiştirildi. Suudi Arabistan Haber Ajansı (SPA)'da yer alan haberde, dün yayınlanan Kraliyet Emirleri doğrultusunda; Hac Bakanı Dr. Fuad Bin Abdüsselam Farisi görevinden alındı. Yerine Şura Meclisi Başkan Yardımcısı Dr. Bandar Bin Muhammed Bin Hamza Esad Hajjar getirildi. Diğer değişiklikler ise şöyle: Ekonomi ve Planlama Bakanı Halit Bin Muhammed El-Kusaybiy yerine Suudi Arabistan Merkez Bankası Başkanı Dr. Muhammed Bin Süleyman Muhammed El-Casir, Kamu Hizmetleri Bakanı Muhammed Bin Ali El-Fayiz'in yerine Şura Meclisi Başkan Yardımcısı Dr. Abdurrahman Bin Abdullah Bin Abdülaziz El-Beraak, Sanayi

ve Ticaret Bakanı Abdullah Bin Ahmet Zeynel yerine Dr. Tevfik Bin Favzan Bin Muhammed El-Rabia atandı. Şura Meclisi'ne de yeni atamaların yapıldığı belirtildi

<http://www.haberler.com/suudi-krali-abdullah-kabinede-degisiklikler-yapti-3189686-haberi/>

- **Saudi King makes minor cabinet reshuffle; no major shift in financial policy seen**



Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah (L) smiles at his brother Saudi Crown Prince Nayef during the Cabinet session at al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz made a minor reshuffle in the cabinet of the oil-rich kingdom late on Tuesday, the first since 2009, state media reported.

The main ministries of defense, interior and foreign affairs, held by top members

of the royal family, remain unchanged, as does the strategic energy ministry.

Analysts said some of the changes had been expected and do not signal a major shift in financial and monetary policy of the world's top oil exporter, but could indicate a move towards market liberalization, according to Reuters.

In the reshuffle, planning and economy minister Khaled al-Gosaibi was replaced by Mohammed al-Jasser, who had served since February 2009 as governor of the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), or the central bank, AFP reported.

Fahed al-Mubarak succeeded Jasser.

The king also removed the minister of commerce and industry, Abdullah Zainel, and replaced him with Tawfeeq al-Rabeeah, while the minister of hajj Fuad al-Farsi was replaced by Bandar al-Hajjar.

Mohammed al-Fayez, who served as civil service minister, was replaced by Abdullah al-Barrak.

The current defense minister, Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz, a younger half-

brother of the king, took office in November, following the death of his brother, the then crown prince Sultan who held the portfolio for decades.

The king also replaced the deputy head of the Shura Council, a consultative body that advises the government on legislative matters.

The current cabinet was formed in March 2007, and should have been replaced in spring this year after serving its four-year term.

In February 2009, the king made limited changes to the cabinet, and appointed the first woman to the post of deputy education minister.

The king holds the post of prime minister.

Saudi Arabia's central bank does not run a fully independent monetary policy as it needs to keep interest rates close to U.S. benchmarks due to its currency peg to the dollar to prevent unwanted capital flows. That makes fiscal policy a key tool to steer the oil-reliant economy.

Monica Malik, chief economist at EFG-Hermes in Dubai, told Reuters that appointing a new central bank governor with a background in investment banking and the stock market could be an indication of Saudi Arabia's gradual shift toward development of capital markets and liberalization.

"We expect monetary policy, including the peg to the U.S. dollar, to continue following this government reshuffle," Malik said.

"We also believe that current economic policy will be maintained with focus on economic liberalization, improving investment environment and job creation," she added.

Saudi Arabia, which has been considering a wider opening of its stock market for several years, has recently indicated details of the proposed framework of foreign ownership, although the timeframe is yet to be finalized.

Hossein Shobokshi, a Saudi columnist, said the new appointments represented a move toward a new generation of Saudi

officials: “They are young, educated and proven professionals.”

The kingdom, the only Middle East member of the Group of 20 developed and emerging nations, has earmarked more than \$400 billion over five years from 2008 on infrastructure projects. It also plans to boost spending by an estimated \$110 billion, or 19 percent of economic output, over several years.

In October, King Abdullah named Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, a half brother of King Abdullah, as new crown prince following the death of Prince Sultan.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182484.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Kuwait emir swears in new cabinet one day after line-up was named by PM**



Sheikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Sabah was last month named the new prime minister, after the resignation of the government during the oil exporter’s deepest political crisis in years. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

Kuwait’s cabinet was sworn in on Wednesday by the Gulf state’s emir, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, state news agency KUNA reported, one day after a new government was named.

The world’s number six oil exporter named a new government on Tuesday, replacing the heads of only some minor ministries.

Oil Minister Mohammad al-Busairi and Finance Minister Mustapha al-Shamali held on to their posts, as did Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled al-Sabah and Trade Minister Amani Bouresli, according to Reuters.

The emir of the Gulf state last month named the outgoing defense minister, Sheikh Jaber al-Mubarak al-Sabah, as the new prime minister, after the resignation of the government during the oil exporter’s deepest political crisis in years.

Sheikh Jaber was appointed to form a new cabinet after former prime minister Sheikh Nasser Mohammad al-Ahmad al-Sabah quit in the wake of the unrest.

“Sheikh Jaber named Dr. Fadhel Safar Ali Safar as Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs,” a statement on the official Kuwaiti news agency KUNA read.

“Ahmad Abdul Mohsen al-Mulaifi was named Minister of Justice, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, Dr. Amani Khaled as Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Planning and Development, while Salem Mutheeb al-Athaina as Minister of Electricity and Water, and Minister of Communications.”

“Sheikh Jaber also named Mohammad Abbas Rabee’ al-Nomas as Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, and Minister of State for Housing Affairs, and re-appointed Sheikh Hamad Jaber al-Ali al-Sabah as Minister of Information,” it added.

Last week, the Kuwaiti emir issued a decree to dissolve parliament.

Opposition lawmaker Hussein Mazyed said that Kuwait was expected to dissolve its parliament in the wake of recent political unrest.

“Dissolving parliament will help resolve our political crisis. I expect the decision to be announced within hours,” Mazyed told reporters outside parliament, according to news agency AFP.

Fresh general elections must now be held within 60 days after the dissolution of the parliament, according to Kuwaiti constitution.

Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah has dissolved the house on three occasions since May 2006.

In recent weeks, Kuwaiti ministers have stepped down in protest against the strained political situation in the country and the government’s treatment of demonstrators.

Hundreds of opposition activists overran parliament on November 16 after clashes

with riot police that followed a large protest to demand the prime minister's resignation and the dissolution of parliament.

The opposition and youth activists had accused the former prime minister of failure to fight corruption and manage the oil-rich Gulf state effectively and had launched a campaign since March

Kuwait, OPEC's third largest producer, pumps around 3 million barrels of crude oil per day. It has a native population of 1.2 million people, besides 2.4 million foreign residents.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/14/182454.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

- **Yemen arrests al-Qaeda members for attack plans on foreign targets**



Yemen's army has taken control of Zinjibar, the capital of southern Abyan

province, from Islamist militants suspected of links to al-Qaeda. (Reuters)

By AL ARABIYA WITH AGENCIES

SANA'A

Six wanted al-Qaeda militants who were plotting to attack foreign targets have been arrested by Yemeni authorities, the defense ministry said on Tuesday.

The ministry said the suspected militants were also plotting to attack local government figures, while a similar report by the state news agency Saba said the suspects included an al-Qaeda leader that he was suspected of leading a cell that attacked Sana'a airport in 2009.

"These elements were conducting surveillance (on) targets they wanted to conduct terrorist operations against, including leaders and prominent state figures as well as government facilities and Arab and foreign missions," Saba quoted a security source as saying.

The agency published mug shots of the six suspects who it said were also accused of recruiting youths to fight with militants in other provinces of Yemen, which was

plunged into widespread disorder by an anti-government uprising this year.

They were among 16 who tunneled their way out of a prison in Aden, although an interior ministry official denied any al-Qaeda link, Reuters reported.

Meanwhile on Tuesday, al-Qaeda linked gunmen fired on a Yemeni military vehicle killing three soldiers and wounding 11 others near the southern city of Zinjibar, a military source told AFP.

“Al-Qaeda gunmen attacked Monday evening a military vehicle while en route to a base east of Zinjibar, causing it to overturn,” said the official requesting anonymity.

“Three soldiers were killed and 11 others wounded,” in the attack, he said.

#### Diplomatic boost

Ambassadors of the five U.N. Security Council members and Gulf Arab diplomats on Tuesday met government officials and a committee overseeing a ceasefire in Yemen’s commercial capital Taz, where fighting had raged in recent weeks.

“They said they would support the national unity government’s efforts to tackle the impact of the clashes in Taz,” said Abdullah Noman, an opposition leader who attended the meeting. “The ambassadors focused on the future, on reconstruction efforts”.

Saleh loyalists and opponents began withdrawing from the streets of Taz last week after a fragile truce was agreed to put an end to street battles in which dozens were killed.

Under a plan brokered by Gulf Arab states with the help of a U.N. envoy, members of Saleh’s General People’s Congress (GPC) and opposition parties divided cabinet posts between them to form a cabinet that will lead the country to presidential elections next February.

#### Detainees freed

Also on Tuesday, the Yemeni interior minister ordered the release of all detainees held in connection with nearly 11 months of protests in Sana’a to press President Ali Abdullah Saleh to step down after 33 years in office, state news agency Saba said.

Activists said the decision, which follows a peace deal that resulted in the establishment of a unity government headed by an opposition leader, could affect up to 1,400 people held in the capital since protests began in February.

"We are not certain yet that all have been released," said Mane' al-Mutairi, an activist, told Reuters, adding that most of those held in relation to the protests were in Sana'a.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/12/13/182445.html?PHPSESSID=u98cqsbmag153cu2hb5ahtsde3>

## 8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN / AFGANİSTAN - PAKİSTAN

### • US defence chief sees progress in Afghanistan

Leon Panetta tells US troops they are winning and says 2011 marks a "turning point" for conflict-ravaged country.



Panetta, right, told US troops the conflict in Afghanistan was moving in the right direction [REUTERS]

The US defence secretary has told US troops in Afghanistan that they are winning the conflict against the Taliban as Washington and its allies prepare to begin withdrawing more forces and handing responsibility for security to Afghan forces.

Leon Panetta addressed US troops on Wednesday at a forward operating base in Paktika province, near the Afghan border with Pakistan ahead of meetings with military commanders.

"We're moving in the right direction and we're winning this very tough conflict," he said.

The US is due to pull 23,000 of its 91,000 troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2012 ahead of a scheduled final withdrawal from the country in 2014.

But some analysts suggest Washington is keen to accelerate its withdrawal after more than 10 years in the country, with the Pentagon facing severe budget cuts.

A recent surge in violence along Afghanistan's border with Pakistan as well as deteriorating relations between the governments in Kabul and Islamabad have prompted concerns for the country's future stability.

US relations with Pakistan have also worsened since NATO strikes killed 24 Pakistani troops near the Afghan frontier last month and Panetta's arrival followed Islamabad's decision to move air defence systems to the area and the closure of two border crossings on NATO supply routes.

Al Jazeera's Bernard Smith reported from Kabul that while the US and its allies are arguing that progress has been made ahead of the 2015 withdrawal, UN statistics that violence has peaked in 2011 contradict this assertion.

"In the east of Afghanistan, NATO's own figures say there's been a 21 per cent increase in what it calls enemy attacks," he said.

Panetta told reporters that Washington would continue to back Pakistani efforts to secure its border regions.

"This has been a difficult and complicated relationship as all of you know, but it is an important relationship, and it is one that we have to continue to work at," he said.

The dispute between the US and Pakistan is also beginning to raise some concern from the Afghani government, Smith reported.

Panetta also played down concerns about Afghanistan's future, saying 2011 had been a "turning point" for the country, citing lower levels of violence and the successful turnover of portions of the country to Afghan control.

"Clearly I think Afghanistan is on a much better track in terms of our ability to eventually transition to an Afghanistan that can govern and secure itself," he said.

Panetta's visit to Afghanistan is the second leg of an international tour that kicked off in Djibouti.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2011/12/2011121483245519920.html>

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