



Middle East Mediterranean

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European
Context**
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Middle East Mediterranean

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Middle East Mediterranean (MEM) is an unbiased bimonthly report of the *ELIAMEP Middle East Research Project*, focusing largely on geopolitical and economic developments, debates as well as policies, affecting the future of the Middle East. Having a global outlook MEM hosts analyses, commentaries, interviews and news, conducting research in the fields of politics, economics and culture in the Middle East and adjacent areas, such as the Eastern Mediterranean.

NOTICE: The views expressed in the articles of the *Middle East Mediterranean* do not reflect the point of view of the Hellenic Institute for European and Foreign Policy and the Editorial Team.

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Editor's Note

The deterioration of security in the Middle East in the aftermath of the so-called “Arab Spring” has brought to light now more than ever the phenomenon of lack of security for various religions and sects in the Middle East. Religions, such as Christianity, face the prospect of extinction in terms of numbers from the region. The migration of hundreds of thousands of Christians from Mesopotamia in the last decade manifests the extent and severity of this human catastrophe. The same is the case for other religions such as Judaism and Islam. Apparently the emergency of this deteriorating process calls for the active interest and involvement of the international community in order to prevent further escalation of violence and lack of respect for basic human rights, such as the freedom of religion.

In this context, on the initiative of its President Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held a Conference on *Freedom of religion and safety for the Christian communities in the Middle East and the Southern Mediterranean* in Athens, on 7 May 2014. The Conference was organized in the framework of the South Programme, with the participation of representatives of parliaments of Algeria, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, of the National Constituent Assembly of Tunisia, of the Palestinian National Council, of Egyptian political forces, as well as religious leaders and invited experts.

In this issue of MEM there is an effort to elaborate further on this important event and topic by covering various aspects such as the situation in Egypt and Turkey as well as the attitude and role of Europe in this regard.

MEM

Analyses

Egyptian Christians since the July 25 Elections

Ali Sonay

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There is currently an agreement among Coptic Christians, that the security situation has to be ameliorated. The state attempts therefore to include the Copts along pre-revolutionary lines.

Egyptian society and politics are often perceived as polarized between a Muslim majority and a Christian, mainly Coptic minority. In the wake of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 this divide has intensified, as sectarian attacks – for example on churches – have increased significantly since Mubarak’s ouster.¹ In order to understand the current societal stance of Christians in Egypt, one has to look at the still operative historical background.

Nationalist discourse is very dominant in Egypt since the British occupation in 1882 and the subsequent revolutions in 1919 and 1952, whereby notions like national or Egyptian unity have emerged as crucial factors, under which confessional issues have been

subsumed.² Thus, problems like “hardline Islamists [,] objecting to the construction, renovation or extension of churches”³ quoting Tadros, which occurred many times whereby government officials downplayed the sectarian factor, in order to sustain national unity.

However, security concerns have been the fundamental apprehension for the Coptic Pope and the state developed since Gamal Abdel Nasser, a mutually depended relationship. ⁴ After the toppling of Mubarak, a new politicization and subsequent activism of a broad segment of Egyptians - also Copts -

¹ Tadros, Mariz: Copts under Mursi: Defiance in the Face of Denial. In: Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), No. 267, Summer 2013 “Christians”. Retrieved from: <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer267/copts-under-mursi>, June 14, 2014.

² Ibrahim, Vivian: The Copts of Egypt: Challenges of Modernisation and Identity. London & New York: Tauris Academic Studies (I.B. Tauris Publishers), 2011, p. 2-6.

³ Tadros.

⁴ Doss, Leyla: A civil Coptic Movement struggles in a polarized Egypt. In: Mada Masr, May 12, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://www.madamasr.com/content/civil-coptic-movement-struggles-polarized-egypt>, June 13, 2014.

have unfolded. Hence, Coptic participation at demonstrations, sit-ins and strikes, has also risen. A very sorrowful incident happened on October 9, 2011 at the Maspero state television headquarter, when a demonstration against the army rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) was being staged and 28 demonstrators, mainly Copts, were killed.⁵ The logic behind this behavior of the authorities is aptly summarized by Sherif Younis.

“The national security regime depends entirely on corruption and the resulting condition of general impotence to grease the pockets of its allies on the ground. It also depends on the creation of a deteriorating security situation in order to fracture society into competing segments locked into attitudes of mutual distrust. State television coverage of the savage massacre that took place in front of the gates of the Maspero Public Broadcasting Building, which turned on an open call to the ‘citizenry’ to ‘rescue’ the army, was a glaring example of this strategy.”⁶

⁵ Tadros.

⁶ Younis, Sherif: The Maspero Massacre: The Military, the Media, and the 1952 Cairo Fire as Historical Blueprint. In: Jadaliyya, October 17, 2011. Retrieved from: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2882/-the-maspero-massacre-the-military-the-media-and-t>, June 14, 2014.

The Maspero massacre and its aftermath had a profound impact on the Coptic community and revealed that it must not be looked at as a monolithic entity, but diverse voices should be taken into account. Besides, the already existing *Maspero Youth Union* (MYU), 30 other movements were established in order to broaden civil rights, among others the “*Coalition for Egypt’s Copts, the Martyr’s Blood Movement, the October 9 Movement, [and] Families of the Maspero Martyrs Union.*”⁷ Whereas with the presidency of Mohammed Mursi from the Muslim Brotherhood, the government tried to assure the Coptic community by the valorization of the Pope, Coptic activism proliferated further, because - as already mentioned - pressure in everyday life increased.⁸ Thus, while many Copts prefer a military rule due to security concerns, a divide emerged between activists supporting demonstrations against the Muslim Brotherhood and opponents about if these would eventually be beneficial to the Brotherhood or not.⁹ In this sense, a number of activists from the MYU participated in the *Tamarrud* (Rebel) campaign, which aimed at collecting 15 million signatures against Mursi, implying to exceed the

⁷ Doss.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

12 million voted for him and organized successfully the June 30 protests, which eventually brought Mursi down.¹⁰ At the same time the movement itself, refrained from taking part in the celebration of the third anniversary of the January 25th Revolution, while individual activists ignored the movements decision to vote in favor of the new constitution.¹¹ When the MYU announced that it would take part in the commemoration of the Mohammed Mahmoud Street incident in November 2011, other movements as the *Families of the Maspero Martyrs Union*, criticized the MYU.¹²

In spite of these different views, there is currently an agreement among Coptic Christians, that the security situation has to be ameliorated. The state attempts therefore to include the Copts along pre-revolutionary lines, that is by co-opting the church.¹³ The latest example would be, that interim president Adli Mansour issued in one of his last official acts, a law on parliamentary elections stipulating that each party list, must include three and that each individual list nine Copts.^{14.}

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid (Although it must be added, that there is also opposition of many Coptic movements to a conservative perceived church, see Doss).

¹⁴ President Mansour leaves office with a legislative bang. In: Ahrām Online, June 5, 2014. Retrieved from: <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/103023/Egypt/Politics-/President-Mansour-leaves-office-with-a-legislative.aspx>, June 13, 2014.

The social reintegration of the Non-Muslim Communities in Turkey

Pantelis Laki Vingas,
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A series of actions reaffirm the belief of the Non-Muslim communities that a democratic society based on drawing every aspect of spiritual inventory of its citizens, regardless of religion and ideology is a steady and strong politically and economically dynamic society with a bright future.

Today Turkey is at an important moment in the modern history of the country, during which a legal platform is expected to enable the Greek Orthodox and other Non-Muslim Communities of Turkey to enjoy full rights as equal citizens in a thriving society. These communities long to see themselves equal in every aspect both in personal and community freedom. The platform for achieving such a goal is the long awaited adoption of a new constitution in Turkey. The pending new Constitution of the Turkish Republic could ensure in practice, not just theory, the egalitarianism of monotheistic communities. It is, indeed, an important moment in the modern history of Turkey. It is the wish and expectation of all monotheistic communities that the adoption of the new Constitution will enable them to enjoy their rights as equal citizens in a flourishing society.

In this process, there has been an effort to highlight and boost the

activities of the Greek Orthodox Community in order to secure and increase the gains that have been made so far. A series of ongoing activities takes place in this regard.

Firstly a European Programme has been created on the initiative of the Organization for the Support of Greek Orthodox Community (SYRKI), aiming to accelerate the community's rehabilitation by boosting the communal sentiment of being full and equal citizens in the Turkish society. Additionally there is a programme in collaboration with other institutions in Turkey to incorporate smoothly the newcomers to the Community. Moreover the leadership of the Community has increased the lever of communication and cooperation with the state agencies at an unprecedented level.

At an academic level the community is in the process of establishing an academic channel of

cooperation to frame academically the ongoing rehabilitation process for the communities. Interestingly a new organization was established titled “Preservation of the Cultural Heritage.” The goal of the new organization is to preserve a series of numerous monuments related to the culture of the Community in Turkey. This organization is interconnected with the academic activities of the communities and in this framework there will be a demand for experts in cultural management to support this procedure. Also there is a forthcoming book in the making related to various-other than Islam-civilizations in the Muslim society. An indicative paradigm which is an active ongoing programme is that of the Imvros island where there is a developing plan of qualitative restoration of monuments of the Greek Orthodox Community of Imvros. Additionally a new association of the Children of Imvros and Istanbul is under formation.

The aforementioned actions reaffirm the belief of the Non-

Muslim communities that a democratic society based on drawing every aspect of spiritual inventory of its citizens, regardless of religion and ideology is a steady and strong politically and economically dynamic society with a bright future. The society which offers expression, creativity and work for its citizens highlights those very characteristics which guarantee safe and guide further development. Otherwise the dynamics of society has an expiration date, leading it inevitably to decline and decay.

The elimination of religious discrimination is in the era of globalization a precondition so that Turkey keeps the pivotal role of mediator in the new geopolitical chessboard. Finally, leaving aside the theoretical issues of international politics, a new and dynamic role for the minority institutions would allow their members to take their places as full Turkish citizens in modern Turkish society, in the form of a “Community” and without the subtly negative designation as “Minority.” 🇹🇷

Comments

Notes on Challenges to Religious Freedom in the European context

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It is worth considering the extent to which both banal and pernicious links between religion and national identity underlie various forms of violation of religious freedom, in the Middle East as in the European context.

‘Comparing apples and oranges’, as the saying goes, is not necessarily a useless enterprise: considering developments in completely different contexts with different variables at play can, at times, offer greater clarity in our understanding of our own contexts and variables within which we must work. On this basis then I submit that when considering human rights and religious freedoms in the Middle Eastern context, we may fruitfully reflect upon trends and developments in the European context and, specifically, within the European Court of Human Rights.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR, or the Court), through its role defending the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights, has evolved into ‘the most effective

transnational human rights institution on earth’ (Durham 2012: 2)(Durham, Richards, and Thayer 2012). It has become a quasi-constitutional court for approximately 800,000 million individuals residing in the 47 member states of the Council of Europe (Koenig 2012), under which auspices the Convention was adopted. The European Court of Human Rights is now an arena where some of the most challenging debates around European religious pluralism take place, and its case law has centrally contributed to shaping the terms of such controversies. The latter to the extent that the Court may be considered to be in the process of developing a ‘theory’ on the proper place of religion in the public sphere)(Ringelheim 2012): a

process observed by some (Koenig 2012), welcomed by others (Mancini 2010), and criticised by yet others (Evans 2008). The Court increasingly deals with matters touching a nerve of European Christian, Muslim, secular and atheistic publics alike, with its decisions regarding their ‘national’ rights to display a crucifix in public schools (Italy); its engagement with the right to wear the crucifix while working for a state-run airline (UK); and its refusal to engage with resistances to ‘the proliferation’ of religious architectural structures such as minarets (Switzerland), amongst many others. Thus its voice is also a contentious one.

Clearly a critical variable at play is the different national approaches to the place of religion in the public sphere across Europe (and beyond), as well as different national approaches to different religious minority groups in each contexts. Historical and political particularities in individual country cases lead to particularities in perspectives on and policies towards different religious minority groups. These particularities – and especially these *policies* – often come into conflict with the concept of religious freedom as a *universal* right which can be protected by the European Court of Human Rights.

Key to the equation is the variable ‘margin of appreciation’ that the court allows individual states on

religion issues (Evans 2001). Specifically, the *variability* of that margin often draws intense criticism to the Court, as Christian majority norms have tended to be protected more than Muslim minority claims or, indeed, Muslim majority norms (see for example the Court’s protection of the Turkish state’s right to ban the headscarf from universities in *Leyla Sahin v. Turkey* or to close an Islamic oriented political party in *Refah v. Turkey*).

According to Mancini (2010: 26), ‘the collective reputation of a court depends, to a large extent, on the audience at which its opinions are aimed. Judicial authority ultimately depends on the confidence of its citizens. If a court’s interpretations deeply differ from the convictions of the people, the people will start resisting judicial decisions’. Here the relationship between religion and national identity enters the picture as another important variable. A religion-national identity link (whether positive, as in the case of Norway or Greece, or negative, as in the case of France or Turkey) underlies a number of ‘invisible national norms’, as an ‘invisible sacred’ wherein a norm may be neutral but still discriminate indirectly and *yet* go unnoticed, as captured by the uses of the term *Catho-laïcité* in the French context (Laborde 2012). Take, for example, the Swedish case of the taken-for-grantedness of using church

buildings for public school functions and ceremonies (Pettersson and Edgardh 2007). National publics are often prone to defend these national norms, and this can serve as a limitation for the Court the legitimacy of which, as indicated above, is contingent on the confidence of its citizens.

From all of the above there are certainly insights that can be applied to the Middle Eastern context, particularly regarding the influence on religious freedom of the relationship between religion and national identity. That relationship

may be more 'banal' in European contexts (much like Michael Billig's (1995) description of 'banal nationalism', 'merely' manifested in all kinds of symbols around us, including flags, anthems, depictions on currency, etc.), but as Billig notes, banal does not imply *benign*. It is worth considering, then, the extent to which both banal and pernicious links between religion and national identity underlie various forms of violation of religious freedom, in the Middle East as in the European context. 🇺🇸

Europe safeguarding freedom of religion in the Middle East

Dr. Evangelos Venetis

The Middle East Research Project Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy-ELIAMEP

Europe must display keen interest to develop an action plan swiftly to address the problem of violations of religious freedom in the Middle East. Active cooperation is needed to ensure the human rights of Christians and other religions in the region.

The dramatic reduction in the number of Christians in the Middle East combined with the blatant violation of human rights at the level of religious tolerance and freedom of speech, security of lives and property of Christians and other religions of the region, including Islam, are worrisome events that need to be addressed.

In Turkey during the last decade and after 80 years of Nationalist government, the Islamic AKP government started slowly but steadily the reintegration process of Christian, Jewish and other recognized minorities in everyday social life in Turkey. This was achieved bureaucratically through the position of Representative of the non - Muslim Religious Foundations in the Council of the General Assembly of the General Directorate of Religious Foundations. Key issues related to property and legal affairs of minorities remained unsolved, for

instance, the reopening of the Christian Orthodox Theological School of Halki which remains *desideratum*.

Besides Christians, the non-recognition of the Muslim faith of million Alevi in Turkey is a challenge to the concept of respect for human rights for such a large portion of the Turkish population. As a result it is necessary that the Turkish government to end religious discrimination against Alevi, granting them full rights.

Elsewhere, in certain Arab countries, the situation for religious minorities and majorities is serious. In Syria and Bahrain majorities of Sunni and Shiite respectively are politically marginalized. The same happens with the Sunni minority in Iraq and the Shiite in Egypt and Yemen respectively. The result of such a discrimination are Christians, Muslims and others who are forced to migrate, often illegally to Europe,

as evidenced by their numbers in detention centers in the countries of southern Europe. Obviously safeguarding the rights of persecuted persons wherever they are and whoever they are, is a prerequisite for sustaining social and geopolitical peace.

The issue of religious discrimination is associated with both Islam and Europe. As regards the Muslim society, it should be noted that it is about: i) the conflict between political Islam-tradition and secularism-modernity in the societies of Sunni Islam; ii) the regional Sunni-Shiite competition. Also it must be noted that the persecution Christians and other religions suffer is not promoted by the state but by marginalized outlawed Sunni extremist groups, e.g. in the case of the Monastery of St. Catherine of Sinai, Egypt. The threat of religious discrimination also means a threat to the secular nature of Muslim societies. In fact the rising influence of extremist groups works against a multi polar, plural and tolerant society.

As far as Europe is concerned the negligence that Europeans have displayed in this regard is due to the distinction between religion and state affairs in the last two centuries, which has led to the so far lack of strong interest of Europe for religious affairs of Middle Eastern

countries. Moreover, the EU policy is still dictated by national criteria with religion having a secondary role, especially when it comes to non-EU citizens staying in other regions. Religion is simply not part of the game.

Having these in mind it must be emphasized that Europe must display keen interest to develop an action plan swiftly to address the problem of violations of religious freedom in the Middle East. What is needed is promoting cooperation between the EU and the countries of interest; it is also important to have civil society groups conveying the message of respect of religious freedom.

Hence, active cooperation is needed to ensure the human rights of Christians and other religions in the region and prevent the possibility of having religious freedom falling on deaf ears of the distinction between religion and politics in Europe and the political dimension of religion in the Middle East. 



Focus on

The Council of Europe and Freedom of Religion in the Middle East

The respect of human rights and religious freedom in particular is important for understanding regional developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Given the deterioration of respect of human rights in the region there is a need for Europe to be actively involved in this regard in order to facilitate the observation of religious freedom implementation in the region.

In this context, **Mrs. Dora Bakoyannis**, President of the Committee for Political Affairs and Democracy of the Council of Europe, stresses out key aspects of the policy of the Council of Europe on religious freedom in the region.

Q: *Today the religious freedom of Christian and other religious minorities in the Middle East is jeopardized. What is the position of the Council of Europe in this regard?*

A: The religious freedom of Christians and other religions in the Middle East is not only a tragic issue by itself but also a major aspect of international human rights which need to be fully respected by everyone. The Council of Europe asks the governments of the countries in the Middle East to cooperate in order to observe the respect and protection of human rights of their citizens. I have the honour to be the Rapporteur of the

relevant report at the Parliamentary Assembly.

Q: *What are the reasons for the religious discrimination in the Middle East today?*

A: The issue of religious discrimination is associated with the religious condition in the Middle East and the general rise of fundamentalism. In the Muslim societies of the region there is also clash between tradition and modernity and a regional Sunni-Shiite rivalry. The discrimination against Christians and other religions is not promoted by states, (though some forbid, e.g., churches)

but by marginalized outlawed extremist groups.

Q: *What does Europe do to address this religious discrimination?*

A: Europe observes and protects the implementation of human rights principles in the region and globally. Europe is in the process of creating a framework of actions in this direction through the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and other bodies, in order to raise the standards of action and to coordinate our stand further for major efficiency aiming to achieve tangible results as soon as possible.

Q: *In the Athens session on May 7, the “Committee of Political Affairs and Democracy of the Council of Europe” pledged to take action in order to face and prevent the deterioration of the status of religious freedom in the Middle East. What are the steps you intend to take in this context?*

A: The creation of a framework for cooperation between the EU institutions and the governments of countries in which religious freedoms are at stake is necessary. The EU also should discuss and highlight the problem with visits of its officials to the respective countries. At the same time, the countries of the region are in the midst of a transitional period. I strongly believe that their new Constitutions have to guarantee all

the fundamental human rights, including religious freedom, to the benefit of their people. Moreover, it is necessary to enable civil society groups to spread the message of respect and observation of religious rights in the Middle East. We need an integrated and coherent approach by all state agents and NGOs vis-a vis these countries and we are now moving in that direction.

Q: *In regard to Turkey, the issues of the Chalki Theological School, the recognition of the Alevite Minority, and quite recently the Aya Sofia case, are some of the major issues related to the need of having Turkey respecting human rights. Are you optimistic about such a need?*

A: We have constantly been in contact with the Turkish government, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and governments from around the globe in order to address and resolve the issue of the Halki Theological School, the Alevis rights and other issues. I believe that the time will eventually come, when Ankara will fully respect religious freedom, in its territory. Our duty is to remind them of their obligations.

Q: *In countries such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq the status of Christians is threatened. How does the Council of Europe plan to safeguard their status in the short term?*

A: Following our initiative we are trying to develop an action plan to address the problem of violations of religious freedom in the Middle East. The Council of Europe and the EU should discuss and highlight the problem holding meetings with officials of the respective countries both in the region and in Europe. The aim of these meetings is to create a framework of political cooperation with fruitful results.

Q: *What is the message you wish to send to the countries of the Middle East where religious discrimination is widely attested?*

A: Last month, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope Francis have met in the Holy Lands and stressed the need to safeguard the right of religious freedom. They expressed their concern over the situation facing Christians amidst the conflicts of the Middle East and spoke of the urgency of the hour that compels them to seek the reconciliation and unity of the human family whilst fully respecting legitimate differences. I believe this is the message. The time is ripe for an overall discussion of the status of human rights in the countries of the Middle East. Religious discrimination is unacceptable to the

civilised world, wherever, and in whichever way, such discrimination takes place. Based on political mutual respect and cultural understanding we can build up trust with every country in the region in order to achieve the implementation of human rights respect in the region.

Q: *What is the role of the ongoing dialogue of religions as a means of disseminating the message of respect of religious freedom in the Middle East?*

A: The dialogue of religions is a major channel of communication and cultural dialogue between various civilisations. Religions form the backbone of the worldview and the culture of most civilisations globally; hence, without religious understanding and mutual cultural interaction, it is impossible to achieve tangible results. The dialogue of religions must be boosted further by Europe in order to become an important parameter of the overall campaign of Europe for a cultural rapprochement and understanding for the sake of respect of human rights internationally. 🇪🇺

Monitoring the Middle East

Afghanistan

Abdullah makes fraud allegations (29 June, 2014)

Afghan presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah has made allegations of fraud in the country's recent presidential runoff vote. The campaign team for Abdullah released audio tapes which allegedly reveal stuffing ballot boxes and fraud in the June 14 runoff poll. The recordings are said to have captured conversations between Zia-ul-Haq Amarkhail, head of the secretariat of the Independent Election Commission, and the aides of rival presidential candidate Ashraf Ghani in various provinces.

Bahrain

Police crackdown on Sitra island protests (19 June, 2014)

Bahraini security forces have intensified their brutal crackdown on anti-regime protesters as police clash with demonstrators holding rallies in several villages in the island of Sitra near the capital Manama. The Bahraini regime's Saudi-backed police forces fired rubber bullets and tear gas canisters Wednesday evening at crowds of protesters that were holding rallies against the persisting crackdown on anti-regime demonstrators.

Comment: The crisis in Bahrain is associated with that of Iraq and Syria.

Egypt

Five explosions in Cairo Metro (25 June, 2014)

A new bomb exploded in the subway station of the northern Cairo Ezmpet el Nachla thereby injuring three people, Lieutenant Alaa Abdel Zacher, the head of the explosive ordnance disposal Cairo, told Reuters

Comment: Egypt's instability is not temporary.

Iran

Fifth round of Vienna nuclear negotiations over (21 June, 2014)

The fifth round of negotiations on the nuclear program in Tehran between Iran and Group 5 +1 (U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany) concluded today in Vienna while talks will resume on 2 July, announced a spokesman the European Union. The representative of the EU reaffirmed that it has initiated the drafting of a common word agreement with Iran. On his part, Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif argued that the basic disagreement over the controversial Iranian nuclear program remain between the Islamic state and the 5 +1 group, after five days of talks in the Austrian capital.

Iraq

Maliki accuses S. Arabia, Qatar of meddling in Iraq (17 June, 2014)

The Iraqi government today accused the Saudi Arabia that supports economic organizations of the insurgents in Iraq and that has sided with "terrorism". Recent statements of Saudi Arabia "show that is in the place of terrorism", said in a statement issued by the office of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.

Kuwait

New banknotes in Kuwait (30 June, 2014)

The wide-scale media campaign launched by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) on May 19 to promote new banknotes has contributed to a smooth replacement with currently used notes in the first day of circulation. The fact that the launching of fresh banknotes coincides with the holy month of Ramadan has also helped in a smooth replacement. Many citizens and residents on Thursday easily withdrew new banknotes in preparation for the fasting month as young people began to get the new issue in order to post them on social communication networks.

Lebanon

Attack on Hezbollah stronghold in Lebanon (24 June, 2014)

A suicide bomber blew up his car in which he was traveling in Shiite district of southern Beirut on Monday evening near a checkpoint and a nearby cafe where people were watching match of the World Cup being held in Brazil. "This was a car bomb and there is a high probability that this is a suicide attack," said a security source which was not able to determine the possible number of dead. There are some people injured by the explosion while the suspect is dead bomber according to a security source. According to an AFP photographer News of the explosion several cars burst into flames, significant damage to homes while firefighters put out the fire. Ambulances carrying wounded to hospitals. The explosion took place in a suburb of the capital of Lebanon is inhabited mainly by supporters of Shiite group Amal, who is an ally of militant movement Hezbollah.

Libya

Turkish nationals to abandon Libya (25 June, 2014)

On Sunday, Retired General Khalifa Chaftar apologies addressing the citizens of Turkey and Qatar to leave eastern Libya, where there is a state of anarchy, in two days, accusing the governments of the two states that support "terrorism." Overall 420 Turkish workers removed today (from Libya, departing) from the International Airport of Misrata, because of the threats came from the east, made by the forces of Khalifa Chaftar "said Mohamed Ismail, an airport spokeswoman. Both Turkey and Qatar have expressed their support for the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamic movement that the new government in Egypt and the Gulf countries have declared a "terrorist" organization.

Palestine - Israel

Israel : Syria is responsible for the Golan Heights attack (24 June, 2014)

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said Israel today that military forces of the regime of Bashar al-Assad responsible for the attack in which a 13 year old Israeli was killed Sunday in the Israeli-occupied area of the Golan Heights. Antitank missile launched from Syrian territory hit the vehicle in which he was traveling child, son cooperating with the Israeli army in the construction fence along the border with the Syrian Golan area.

Saudi Arabia

GCC condemns regional religious discrimination (19 June, 2014)

The countries of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIS) express in a joint statement their desire "to address the political religious discrimination and exclusion", after the meeting of foreign ministers of the 57 member countries in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Without referring to Iraq, where promotion of Sunni jihadists is attributed to the marginalization of Sunnis by Shiite government of Nouri al-Maliki's, the announcement OIS emphasizes that its members "are ready to jointly tackle the policies of religious discrimination and exclusion".

Somalia

Kenyan airplanes attack al-Shabbab bases in Somalia (24 June, 2014)

Kenyan fighter jets have raided two bases with Islamist insurgents al-Shabbab in Somalia and killed at least 80 members of the organization, sources said today the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). For their part, the rebels have denied al-Shabbab information and argued that no member of the organization was not killed. The AMISOM, forces which this year launched new attacks against al-Shabbab announced that Kenyan fighter jets carried out raids in the provinces Anoli and Kundei in South Juba region. In the notice they are not specified when the raids took place these. "The air raids in Anoli resulted in killing at least 30 militants of al-Shabbab and destroyed three vehicles and a jeep Land Cruiser, which was loaded with ammunition," the announcement said AMISOM. In the same text added that at least 50 rebels were killed in the raid in Kundei.

Syria

ISIL and Al-Nosra join forces in Syria (25 June, 2014)

The two rival armed extremist Islamic organizations, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Nosra Front, the Syrian wing of Al-Qaeda, have decided to join in Abu Kamal, the largest city of the Syrian-Iraqi border, today announced the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The partnership allows ISIL to act across borders, since they already have control of the border crossing of Al-Khaimah and namesake Iraqi city.

The last load of chemical weapons has been removed from Syria (24 June, 2014)

The last load of chemical weapons declared by Damascus international community was removed from Syria in view of the destruction at sea, today announced the Agency for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) from The Hague. Syria had already delivered 92% of the 1,300 tons

of chemical weapons which had declared the international community in the context of an agreement between Russia and the U.S. last fall. The remaining 8% was charged today in Danish ship that will carry the most dangerous materials in an American vessel, specially modified, which will be destroyed by hydrolysis. The rest, which is not considered so dangerous, destroyed in Finland, USA, Germany and Britain. For the destruction of all chemical arsenals will take about four months. Work top in U.S. ship Cape Ray can not begin until after a loaded all dangerous chemicals in it.

Ten Syrian soldiers dead by Israeli air raids (23 June, 2014)

At least ten Syrian soldiers were killed in the raids carried out by the Israeli Air Force during the night Sunday to today, announced the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. At least ten Syrian soldiers were killed by Israeli raids on military posts on the boundaries of the occupied part of the Golan. Nine rockets were fired from at least two planes and tanks and artillery batteries were destroyed," explained the Observatory.

Turkey

ISIL to establish military base in Turkey (25 June, 2014)

Reports of the Turkish newspaper Vatan, regarding plans of the organization ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) to establish a military base in Anatolia, Turkey. According to the publication, the Vatan relied on information that affirm the existence of 5,000 "militants" in Turkey, who are planning to create "State of Sharia», which includes Cyprus and Azerbaijan. Reports prepared by the secret services in western countries have estimated the number of terrorists with European roots to about 5,000 people, some of which penetrated to Syria and Iraq through Turkish border.

Eleven members of Erdogan's security team in custody (20 June, 2014)

Eleven people from the personal security of the Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan held in Ankara and Istanbul, as part of investigations made on the monitor in the office and in the car of the Turkish Prime Minister in 2012. In raids conducted by the police thoroughly searched the homes of 11 while another person is wanted, Serhat Demir found that missing abroad. The suspects are the arrested security men of the Turkish prime minister and belonged to a very narrow environment. The research on identifying suspects held in Ankara Istanbul to Diyarbakir, the Yozgat and Karabuk. Among the prisoners are the directors of the personal security of the Prime Minister Mehmet Zeki Yüksel and Bulut.

United Arab Emirates

UAE recalls its ambassador from Baghdad (19 June, 2014)

The United Arab Emirates announced today that it withdraw its ambassador in Baghdad for "consultations" because of major developments in Iraq, while denouncing the policy of the Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, which characterize "sectarian". In a statement the Secretary of Emirates expresses "deep concern about the political exclusion and marginalization" to the government of Iraq against "a significant portion of the Iraqi people," said the country's Sunni minority. The UAE is the second country after Saudi Arabia, openly accusing the Prime Minister of Iraq to lead the country to the brink of civil war due to political exclusion of Sunnis. Saudi Arabia had requested even on Monday the formation of a national unity government in Iraq.

Yemen

Eights soldiers dead by al-Qaeda's attack (5 April, 2014)

Eight soldiers were killed in an attack launched by alleged members of Al-Qaeda in a military post in southeastern Yemen earlier today, two days after another bloody assault that occurred during a military headquarters in the city of Aden. In today's attack were killed and four of the perpetrators. "The attackers approached the place (the army) with several vehicles and opened fire with guns of various kinds by soldiers, killing 8 and wounding 11," a military source told AFP. Among the dead is the officer who commanded the unit that was the target of the attack, he added. The attack occurred at the position Aviv on the outskirts of Al Qatn in central province Chantramout, which is a stronghold of Al Qaeda, the same source stated.



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