

## Erdogan becomes 12th president after first public vote

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.08.2014



Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan clinched Turkey's presidency in the first round August 10, winning the election in the first-ever popular poll for the country's head of state with 51.8 percent of the vote.

Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu, the former head of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and a joint candidate of the Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), gained nearly 38.5 percent of the vote, with Selahattin Demirtas, the co-chair of Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), finishing third at 9.8 percent of the vote.

However, Demirtas's total was seen as a success, given that his party mainly focuses on the Kurdish issue. Addressing a large crowd in Ankara late yesterday, Erdogan defined the election as a "historic day." "I greet you with all my heart on this historic day, a trophy night of democracy and the national will," he said. "All of Turkey has won today." He expressed his desire that the elections would be good for the whole country and all friendly countries, while naming Gaza, Ramallah and Jerusalem among the winners. "Today we are closing an era and stepping into a new era," he said.

Erdogan also made a short speech at the ruling AKP's election coordination center in Istanbul in front of a crowd, saying, "We will continue to serve our nation for a better democracy and to make the resolution process rein," openly referring to efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. The ballot box turnout totaled 73.13 percent, way below expectations despite apparent "polarization" in the country. Analysts said the total was around 2 million votes fewer than the turnout at the local elections on March 30. Ahmet Necdet Sezer, the 10th Turkish president, was among those who did not cast their votes.

Erdogan managed to gain around 21 million votes out of the nearly 56 million eligible voters. Out of 2.8 million eligible Turkish voters living abroad, just 8 percent cast their vote. The new president will serve a five-year term and has the right to stand for another term. Outgoing President Abdullah Gül's tenure will end Aug. 28. Erdogan won 47 percent of the votes in Soma, the western province, where 301 miners lost their lives in May 13 disaster even though many criticized him and his party for their callous and indifferent attitude toward the victims. But Erdogan lagged behind İhsanoglu in the small town, who won half of the votes. Justice Minister Bekir Bozdog slammed some media coverage alleging fraud in the presidential elections after Erdogan was seen leading in the polls, saying the reports could not alter reality. "Some media organizations seem to boost fraud claims as they see the results," he said on his Twitter account right after the election results started to be reported by the media.

A number of foreign and local organizations, including the Limited Election Observation Mission (LEOM), which was deployed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), oversaw the elections. Google's special doodle for Turkey's first ever presidential election by a popular vote also created some controversy as the ballot in the image was ticked in favor of one of the candidates on the end of the paper, prompting debates about subliminal messages. The supporters of both Erdogan and İhsanoglu claimed it suggested Google was in favor of their rival, as the two have been placed on the respective ends of the ballot, with Demirtas in the middle. Justice and Development Party (AKP) spokesman Huseyin Celik also thanked voters and everyone who took part in a "calm" election. "No success is a coincidence and all smells sweet," he said.

Turkey is surrounded by countries which are experiencing difficulty, Celik said, adding that citizens should embrace each other in such an atmosphere. Iranian-born Azeri businessman Reza Zarrab, the main suspect in the graft probe that has shaken the country since Dec. 17, 2013, used his Turkish citizenship to cast his vote in Istanbul's Beykoz district, well protected by his ever-present bodyguards. The struggle against the Gulenist movement, or what he calls the "parallel state," constituted a large portion of Erdogan's electoral campaign. The prime minister and the U.S.-based Islamist scholar Fethullah Gulen have been at odds since the Dec. 17, 2013, graft probe that shook the government, resulting in the resignation of Cabinet ministers. Erdogan has accused the Gulen movement of planning a coup against the government.

## Turkish markets moody after Erdogan's election victory

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.08.2014



The Turkish Lira and stocks began the week with gains after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan won the country's first direct presidential election, but assets suddenly started dropping with the dollar/lira ratio rising above 2.15, while the main stock index retreated below 79,000 points.

Turkish assets began the trading day strong as the lira had strengthened to 2.1351 against the dollar from 2.1601 late on Aug. 8 and Borsa Istanbul 100 index rose over 1.6 percent to over 80,000 points. However, the currency and stocks rapidly began to decline in the morning session, as the investor optimism that affected markets in the morning has reversed.

The lira eased back to around 2.154 by around 12:10 p.m., while the main Istanbul share index dropped by more than 1 percent to around 78,300 points. The benchmark 2-year government bond's yield had fallen to 9.23 percent from 9.36 on Aug.8. Erdogan's victory was taken as a sign of continuity at first, but analysts also warned of medium-term risks to economic predictability emerging from the concentration of power. Attention is now turning to the appointment of a new prime minister and economic management team, analysts say.



Markets will be looking for any changes among the main figures on the economic team, such as Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan. “We expect that the market will refocus on the composition of the Cabinet, with the absence of key figures such as Ali Babacan - well-regarded by market participants and thus far central in the promotion of sound economic policy in Turkey - likely to catalyze a marked deterioration in Turkish assets on investor concern over the future trajectory of economic policy-making,” Phoenix Kalen, a London-based strategist at Societe Generale, wrote by e-mail on Aug. 11. But in the long term there are concerns about concentration of power in the hands of a sometimes impulsive leader and the erosion of key checks and balances in the system, according to some analysts. Erdogan has vowed to exercise the full powers granted to the presidency under current laws, unlike his predecessors.

“The presidency has until now been a largely ceremonial position, but it seems that Mr. Erdogan will seek to concentrate more power in the role. If this happens, his victory could lead to a more belligerent and unpredictable policymaking environment,” said William Jackson, Capital Economics emerging markets economist. “In time, a deterioration in the predictability of policymaking and, more generally, institutional standards in Turkey would deter investors and make it more difficult to attract capital inflows.” Erdogan had been insisting on lower interest rates before the election, raising concern over the Central Bank’s independence. He says high interest rates cause high inflation and has repeatedly accused an “interest rate lobby” of speculators of pushing for higher rates and seeking to undermine the Turkish economy.

The Central Bank has already cut its main one-week repo rate by 175 points since May, moves which some economists see as hard to justify given persistently high inflation. “The pressure on the Central Bank to ease monetary policy will persist. Erdogan had been quite vocal regarding the necessity to cut interest rates and he will continue to be so,” said Thu Lan Nguyen, a currency strategist at Commerzbank. “The likely continuation of the rate-cut cycle will put pressure on the lira, particularly when monetary policy in the U.S. is normalized.” Turkey is susceptible to changes in global liquidity conditions because of its large current account deficit.

## Most likely scenario: Davutoglu to be PM

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.08.2014



With Recep Tayyip Erdogan's election as president on August 10, politics in Ankara is now focused on the next prime minister and chairman of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), who is expected to be announced by Erdogan in the coming days.

The most likely scenario floating in the capital Ankara suggests two figures as potential prime ministers, Ahmet Davutoglu and Binali Yildirim, although the former has more of a chance than the other. Binali Yildirim, however, is expected to serve for Erdogan at the presidency as his right hand man.

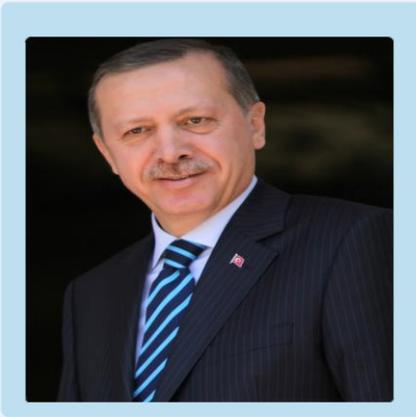
The AKP is expected to hold its extraordinary convention before the presidential handover slated for Aug. 28 in a bid to elect the new chairman so that Erdogan will be able to give the mandate to form the new government on the same day he takes office. He is set to conclude consultations with the party within the coming days before announcing his successor. A strong signal came from Erdogan on Aug. 9, as he held his last and one of his largest public rallies in Konya, Davutoglu's hometown and stronghold. On Aug. 10, front pages of numerous newspapers were full of stories about Davutoglu who hinted that he was mentally ready to assume this job. The message he delivered between the lines was simple: if the next prime minister agrees to work in harmony with President Erdogan then there would be no problem.

What makes Davutoglu more advantageous, in comparison to any other potential candidates, is that he has no three-term limitation problem, as he still can run for Parliament for two more terms. Another point is that he has shown full loyalty to Erdogan in critical moments and has proven that he may continue to work in harmony with the president. Furthermore, although his performance as foreign minister has been controversial and debatable, his support to Erdogan as ideologue is still very important given the fact that the party will now have to pass another test in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Davutoglu is believed to have a capacity to mobilize the party's grassroots and keep the party united and lead the Cabinet in the best possible way.

However, he will have to accept that he will have no last word on many governmental decisions and even the next Cabinet will be prepared under Erdogan's control. In the case of Davutoglu's election as the next prime minister, the current EU Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, the prime minister's foreign policy advisor Ibrahim Kalin and the current National Intelligence Organization (MIT) chief Hakan Fidan are all considered as potential foreign ministers. However, Cavusoglu is seen more close to this position while Kalin would continue to serve Erdogan at the presidency. Fidan is likely to stay at the MIT, at this very important moment as the government continues to fight against the parallel state. To this end, Interior Minister Efkani Ala is expected to keep his position along with other ministers who joined the Cabinet in the last reshuffle in the fall of 2013. The most important question, however, is whether Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan, who is responsible for the economy, and Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek will continue on in the Cabinet.

# Erdogan consults party grassroots for next AKP leader and prime minister

Hurriyet Daily News, 12.08.2014



President-elect, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has turned to grassroots consultation and inter-party surveys in the search for his successor as party leader and prime minister, as the plot thickens in a possible power struggle between Erdogan and outgoing President Abdullah Gül.

In an Aug. 11 meeting of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) highest decision-making body, the Central Decision and Executive Board (MKYK), Erdogan asked party members their preferences for both party chairman and prime minister. All members submitted the name of a single nominee in a closed envelope.

As in the MKYK meeting, Erdogan is likely to ask attendants of an expanded meeting of the AKP's provincial chairs on Aug. 14 for their preferences, while also delivering the questionnaire to lawmakers this week. Meanwhile, a number of senior AKP members have ruled out possible vitiating factors in Gül's return to the party, arguing that his return will enrich the party. "Abdullah Bey will of course come to our party. He will enrich and strengthen our party. Besides, Abdullah Bey has a place among majority of the society, in the grassroots of our party and in our parliamentary group as well as in hearts of all of us. What could be more natural than his return?"

Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay said in a live interview with TRT Haber news station broadcast late on Aug. 11, hours after Gül announced his intention to return to the ruling AKP after ending his tenure as head of state at the end of this month. "If Erdogan is the party's first name, then Gül is the second," Atalay added, saying both names had performed a "splendid association" since the formation of the AKP. Similar messages came from AKP Deputy Chair Salih Kapusuz, posting on his personal Twitter account late on Aug. 11.

"I believe that those who describe as 'irresponsibility' the statements of return by Abdullah Gül, who exerted serious efforts for the emergence of the AK Party movement, are evil-minded," Kapusuz tweeted, inviting those who make such statements to "political politeness over the symbolic names of the movement." "Were some circles thinking that Gül would do politics in the [Republican People's Party] CHP or [Nationalist Movement Party] MHP?" Kapusuz also asked, referring to the two largest opposition parties. He also claimed that Gül could "never be a splinter," but only a "conjunctive for the movement," Kapusuz's remarks came after AKP deputy Şamil Tayyar, speaking in a televised interview on Aug. 11, criticized Gül's statements.

# Erdogan: Next Turkish PM to be announced on August 21

Hurriyet Daily News, 15.08.2014



President-elect Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said he will conclude his consultations regarding the party's future leadership with Justice and Development Party (AKP) officials next week.

Erdogan also said the next chairman and prime minister will be announced Aug. 21. "We are going to hold our Central Executive Board meeting next Thursday. We'll discuss this issue again there. We'll declare the common individual to be determined by our party's relevant bodies after this meeting," Erdogan said in a reception held on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the foundation of the party.

Erdogan spent the entire day in consultation on Aug. 14, first with expanded provincial chairs, mayors and other party officials and then with his lawmakers later in the day. Erdogan will continue these steps through the next week, but Aug. 21's meeting will be decisive in selecting the AKP's next chairman, and thus the next prime minister. The party will hold its extraordinary convention on Aug. 27 to officially elect the next chairman, a day before Erdogan takes the office from outgoing President Abdullah Gül. Erdogan will take his presidential oath on Aug. 28 and said he will give the mandate for the formation of the new government to the new prime minister on Aug. 29. The next chairman will take the party to the 2015 parliamentary elections and then the party's ordinary convention will be held in late 2015, Erdogan stressed.

Upon a question, Erdogan dismissed concerns regarding the party's future in his absence, but said there could always be an attempt to weaken the party, adding "Measures should be taken to not give any chance to those attempts." Erdogan recalled calls for him to resign from the Prime Ministry following the Supreme Council of Elections (YSK) announcing the official results on Aug. 15, stressing "Those who claim this are fabricating their own procedures. One should look at the laws. You will see the documents I sign after Aug. 15 as well." His first bilateral visits abroad as president will be to Turkish Cyprus and Azerbaijan, as is usual for officials taking office as president, prime minister or foreign minister.

Erdogan also gave clues about his probable relations with the opposition under his new capacity and said he will naturally invite opposition leaders to presidential activities. "We'll extend our invitations to them one time, two times, as long as they accept the invites in the frame of social peace. But if they don't accept them, we have to protect the credibility of the presidency. I should openly say there won't be invitations in this case," he said. He recalled that he used the concept of the "new opposition for the new Turkey" and was happy to see it has been widely accepted. On questions pertaining to whether he will participate, as the president, in the anniversaries of the supreme judicial organizations following the June 2013 incident at the Council of State, in which he walked away from the hall following interrupting one the speaker's long speech, Erdogan said.

# Turkey must protect the Iraqi Kurds

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In a one-week blitzkrieg, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who now refer to themselves as the Islamic State (IS), have purged religious and ethnic minorities from the countryside of Mosul and have managed to capture new oil fields, weapons, and most important of all, they captured the Mosul Dam.

ISIL is becoming a bigger threat to Turkey every day, but Turkey's hands are tied with 49 staff of Turkey's Mosul consulate still in ISIL-hands. The Kurdish Peshmerga forces suffered a major blow to their image after they were kicked out of significant territory by the Islamist militants.

Initially, the Kurds were overjoyed when ISIL kicked out the Iraqi troops, and the Kurds managed to secure many territories previously controlled by the Iraqi army. The Kurds hoped ISIL would focus on Baghdad, while the Kurds could work on a Kurdish state. But since the Kurds are Muslims and ISIL sees the Kurdish regions as part of a future caliphate, it's impossible for the Kurds to stay out of this fight. Turkey has a significant interest in protecting Iraqi Kurds, as it aims to protect the future of Turkey's energy security and business ties between the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq (KRG) and Turkey. Moreover, if ISIL manages to beat the Kurds, Turkey could have a dangerous and unpredictable caliphate at its border.

This would also cut off Turkey's access to Iraqi oil and gas and ISIL could then threaten the 2,000 Turkish troops that are still deployed in small bases in northern Iraq under the 1997 agreement in the Duhok province. Mostly likely ISIL would target Turkey in the future since it sees Turkey as part of its global Islamic Ummah. And Turkey could make the same mistakes as Iraqi Kurds in treating ISIL along the same line according to the famous proverb, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." ISIL has already branded the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) head Abdullah Ocalan as "infidels" in its latest English glossy Dabiq. Kurdish commanders and security officers told me the biggest problem the Kurds now have is the lack of ammunition and weapons.

While the ISIL militants captured U.S. heavy weaponry, the Kurds are left with old Kalashnikovs. The Americans did not allow the Iraqi Kurds to buy their own weapons without coordination with Baghdad, which refused to pay the Kurdish armed forces. Unlike in Turkey, the Kurdish armed forces are divided along political lines and are just a light infantry force with very old tanks dating from the Soviet times, old weapons and no air support or advanced anti-tank weapons, nor good artillery or intelligence information on pinpointing the exact location of ISIL militants. The Kurdish army needs more ammunition, night vision goggles, modern tanks, armored personnel carriers (APC), air support and intelligence. They could also use the support of small special forces teams that helped them root out the extremist Ansar al-Islam group in 2003. The Kurds could also use more training after not having fought any major battles after the fall of Saddam in 2003.



The Kurdish Peshmerga forces turned from an insurgent force into a regularly paid army without receiving a significant amount of training, nor experience in the battlefield. This is one of the reasons why Kurdish President Massoud Barzani has called on the old battle-hardened Peshmerga fighters to return to the battlefield. Another crisis the Kurds face is the huge numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, which are at least over 1 million. As daily Hürriyet reported, Turkish defense officials denied any involvement in the bombing campaigns against ISIL in Mosul, in order not to endanger the lives of the Turkish diplomats held hostage by ISIL in Mosul.

With already having Turkish bases in the country, Turkey could easily support the Kurds from Duhok with its special forces, support units, tank battalion and air support with helicopters and fighter jets from Incirlik. But this could seriously threaten the Turkish diplomats held hostage in Mosul, unless Turkey supplies the Kurds with covert military supplies, intelligence and surveillance. Turkey could also support Sunni Arab militia groups to fight against ISIL in the future. There are already indications that Turkey has backed militant groups in Syria to fight ISIL. If military options are too risky, the Turkish government could also choose to provide humanitarian aid, financial support and food supplies, and help the Kurds with setting up refugee camps close to the Turkish border. The Kurdish government is now faced with a huge humanitarian crisis with many NGO workers leaving. But Turkey should not make the same mistake as the Iraqi Kurds since ISIL's goals are global.

# Turkey eyes long-term trade ties with Russia

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.08.2014



Turkey is seeking to engage in a long-term trade alliance with Russia after Moscow's ban on imported Western foods, Turkish Agriculture Minister Mehdi Eker has said. Saying Turkey has emerged as an alternative to procure banned food products, the minister announced a Russian delegation arrived yesterday in Ankara to hold talks with Turkish authorities to discuss potential trade deals.

"We aim to establish a long-term and permanent system within neighborhood relations," Turkish Agriculture Minister said, speaking at the Agricultural Products' Export Assessment meeting.

"In other words, we side with the realization of a scheme that meets our more systematic and long-term targets, instead of a system that meets short-term, instant needs with a sudden reflex," he stresses. "We are keeping necessary technical talks and contact with our counterparts within this framework." Government representatives and exporters have said Moscow's ban – a response to Western sanctions concerning the Ukraine crisis – provided an opportunity for Turkey to bolster its exports not only of food, but also consumer goods.

Eker said Turkey's supply capacity and impact analyses will be considered to determine the amounts and variety of products to be exported to Russia. "There are some products demanded by Russia; white meat, milk, dairy products, eggs and some poultry products," he said. "We have to approach this issue strategically ... We will look to see if we can procure them or not, taking other markets into attention as well." Turkey was the 5th leading supplier of food to Russia with \$1.68 billion worth of trade in 2013.

# Turkey to build camp inside Iraq for Yazidis

Hurriyet Daily News, 13.08.2014



Turkey's disaster agency will set up a tent city in Zakho, northern Iraq, to host around 16,000 Yazidi people who fled the Sinjar region amid ongoing attacks by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The layout plan for the city has already been drafted, Anadolu Agency reported, citing sources from the Prime Ministry's Disaster and Emergency Management Directorate (AFAD), which will build the camp. The agency said the camp will "consist of hotel-tents." Some 30,000 to 40,000 Yazidis have fled to Syria, while around 100,000 more have sought refuge in Zakho.

Some "There are currently around 6,500 Yazidis seeking shelter near the border," AFAD said. The agency is also planning to send four trucks of humanitarian aid to the region in order to meet the essential requirements of the displaced minority group. ISIL militants captured Sinjar and Rabia in Nineveh province last week, forcing thousands of Turkmen, Arabs, Christians and Yazidis to flee. Some 2,000 Yazidis from Iraq crossed the Habur border seeking refuge in Turkey. The refugees have been placed in tents and post-earthquake houses in the region. The Turkish government decided to shelter Yazidi refugees in Silopi in a camp near Mor Gabriel Monastery in Mardin which was set up earlier for Syrians that have fled to Turkey. The municipality of the southeastern province of Şanlıurfa has also decided to set up a camp for 3,000 Yazidis.

The Turkish Red Crescent has provided 20,000 blankets and sleeping bags, and sent a truckload of biscuits and drinking water for Yazidi refugees to the Silopi district in the southeastern province of Şırnak. The aid is being distributed to the refugees under the supervision of AFAD, the agency said Aug. 13. Turkey has also decided to set up a camp in Dohuk for Iraqi Turkmen fleeing from jihadist violence. Meanwhile, a proposal by the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) for an inquiry into the problems of the Yazidis was rejected in Turkey's Parliament. Meanwhile, another government agency, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TİKA), will produce prefabricated houses to be sent to Gazans whose houses have been destroyed in recent Israeli attacks, Deputy Prime Minister Emrullah İşler announced on his Twitter account. The deputy said the initiative came upon an order from President-elect Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

# UK steps up role in Iraq with move to aid Kurds and Yazidis against Isis

The Guardian, 12.08.2014



Britain is intensifying its involvement in Iraq by flying military equipment on behalf of Jordan to Kurdish forces fighting Islamic State (Isis) jihadists in northern Iraq and despatching a fleet of Chinook helicopters to airlift Yazidi refugees besieged on Mount Sinjar.

Hours after the Kurdish security chief Masrour Barazani pleaded with Britain to rally to the help of the Kurds, the government's emergency committee Cobra agreed to transport Jordanian military trucks to Irbil. David Cameron was pressured to launch military strikes against the extremists.

Some Conservative MPs privately criticised the prime minister for failing to cut short his holiday in Portugal to return home to take charge of the government's response to the crisis. The Cobra meeting, chaired by the foreign secretary Philip Hammond, also agreed to deploy Chinook helicopters to land on Mount Sinjar to airlift some of the thousands of Yazidi refugees who fled Isis forces. The deployment of the Chinooks marked a significant escalation of Britain's military involvement in the humanitarian mission in northern Iraq which has been limited until now to dropping supplies of water and solar lanterns from RAF C130 Hercules aircraft.

Hammond told the Cobra meeting that an emergency meeting of EU foreign ministers may be held to agree to arm the Kurdish forces leading the fight against Isis. It is understood that France and some of the new EU member states in eastern Europe are keen to arm the Kurdish forces amid fears that Isis presents a strategic threat both to the region and to Europe. Britain has some sympathy for the French view though the government may not join in arming the Kurds amid signs that that may be a step too far for the Liberal Democrat side of the coalition. Hammond is understood to have made clear that the increased British involvement in Iraq does not amount to classic "mission creep" because it is wholly consistent with the government's stated objective of providing humanitarian assistance and of helping to defeat Isis forces short of direct military involvement.

The British decision to fly Jordanian military equipment to the Kurdish forces in northern Iraq followed a plea by Barazani for Britain to arm the Kurds against the Isis forces now menacing Irbil. He warned that failure to do so is certain to amplify the terror threat at home. In an interview with the Guardian, Barazani implored the British public not to allow fatigue from more than a decade of war to stop support for the Kurds in what is fast shaping up to be the biggest threat to Iraqi Kurdish society since the collapse of the Ottoman empire almost 100 years ago. "In terms of drawing the lines [the regional borders], the UK had the greatest role in the creation of the modern Middle East," he said. "Now is not the time to say it is not our problem. I would like Britain to remember that we are not Helmand, or Basra, we are your friends.



“For how long do the Kurds have to pay the price of the mistakes that were made. We are victims of Sykes Picot,” he said of the British-French agreement that enshrined the modern states of Lebanon and Syria, and led to the creation of Iraq’s current borders. “For how long do we have to be held hostage, or to be vulnerable. The international community needs to find a solution for the Kurds. “Everybody underestimated the strength, the role and the agenda of Isis and is now regretting it, said Barazani. “This is an organisation that does not recognise any legitimate border, or tolerate plurality. It rejects everything else beside itself.” For the past 10 days, Kurdish forces have been battling an Isis advance on the north that quickly consumed areas dominated by minority groups on Iraq’s Nineveh plains. The speed of the advance and the strength of the weaponry used has stunned the autonomous enclave and led to the US supplying weapons in recent days to outgunned Kurdish troops and launch airstrikes against jihadist positions.

Barazani spoke out as Downing Street faced pressure to join the US in launching military strikes. Burns warned that Isis forces “want a holocaust of everyone who does not share their brutal ideology”. Downing Street insisted that the government is not contemplating military action. But three Tory MPs who opposed the planned military strikes against the regime of the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad last year, indicated support for action in Iraq. Dr Julian Lewis, a member of parliament’s intelligence and security committee, Nick de Bois and Dr Phillip Lee all called for parliament to be recalled. Lewis told the Guardian: “The government was proposing last year to take military action to overthrow an appalling dictator with no guarantee that our deadly enemies from al Qaida would not be successful in taking his place and if they did so they would inherit a ready made stock of the very sorts of deadly chemical weapons we had gone to war in Iraq in the mistaken belief that we were trying to keep those from getting into extremists’ hands. This is a totally different situation in Iraq. Far from assisting our deadly enemies to get more power this would be a question of assisting the people of the region to resist our deadly enemies who have a totalitarian, extremist death cult and possess an ideology that is a direct threat to western values and civilisation.”

Alistair Burt, a former Middle East minister, warned that Isis jihadists must be “killed soon” as he voiced support for arming Kurdish forces. Describing the Isis forces as “fascist and lawless bandits” that must be defeated by military action, Burt told the Guardian: “You have to eliminate IS [Isis]. These people will not go to the negotiating table in Geneva. These people have to be killed and have to be killed soon.” Senior Tories say that Cameron’s defeat in last year’s vote, during an emergency recall of parliament at the end of August after Assad’s forces launched a chemical weapons strike against a Damascus suburb, helps explain his reluctance to join the US in launching air strikes against Isis forces. George Osborne advised the prime minister after the vote that it would be all but impossible to secure parliamentary support for future military interventions during the current parliament because of a sizeable contingent of Tory MPs opposed to intervention and a belief in No 10 that Ed Miliband acted in a duplicitous manner.

“David Cameron and George are leery about relying on Ed Miliband,” one senior Tory said. But Tories also say that the Cameron is mindful of public opinion which is wary of military intervention. A ComRes poll for ITV News found overwhelming support (84%) for supplying humanitarian aid to Iraqi civilians trapped on Mount Sinjar. It found that more people (45%) support airstrikes against Isis forces than oppose such action – 37%. But the poll found that voters are overwhelmingly opposed to sending in British troops – by 63% to 18%. Sir Menzies Campbell, the former Liberal Democrat leader, warned of “incalculable” consequences if Kurdish fell to Isis. He told The World at One on BBC Radio 4

# European Union Council session on Iraq to be held in Brussels

ITAR-TASS, 15.08.2014



A special session of the European Union (EU) Council at the level of the Foreign ministers of the 28 member-countries of the EU is to be held here on Friday. It is the first time since the beginning of this year that such a meeting is convened to discuss a subject other than the crisis in Ukraine: this time the situation in Iraq will be the main subject of discussion.

The present ministerial meeting is assembled in view of the “disastrous situation in Iraq from both the humanitarian point of view and in view of the advance of detachments of radical Islamists in fighting against the government army and Kurdish self-defence forces in the country’s north”.

The source said EU countries are lacking a unified position on the subject of deliveries of arms and collateral equipment to the Iraqi Kurds. “There is no unity among the EU ranks. France, Italy, and Spain come out in favour of supplying weapons while Germany, Austria, and Sweden oppose the move,” the source said. The crisis in Ukraine will be touched upon at the meeting but the ministers “will only “exchange estimates of th situation”. No document on Ukraine has been prepared for this meeting. The EU Foreign ministers will exchange opinions about the impact of the EU’s economic sanctions with regard to Russia and Russia’s reply measures on the situation in the national economies of European countries. The EU Foreign ministers are to mull possibilities for aid to countries in West Africa hit by Ebola disease. The Ministers are to touch upon the situation in Gaza Strip, Syria, and Libya as well.

# IS militants in Iraq use no air defense weapons against US aircraft

ITAR-TASS, 13.08.2014



Militants of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq have so far used no air defense weapons against the US Air Force that delivers strikes on their positions, spokesman for the US Department of Defense said on Tuesday.

He said the US command was carefully monitoring the air defense weapons use threat and doing everything to reduce it. At this point, such attacks by the militants have not been recorded. The Pentagon official disproved media reports, alleging that the terrorists are armed with the American-made short-range man-portable air defense systems (MANPAD) that they seized from the Iraqi government forces.

The spokesman said Americans had never supplied such weapons to the Iraqi security forces. US President Barack Obama on August 7 authorized “targeted airstrikes” on IS positions in Iraq to protect American personnel and help Iraqi forces. Obama also authorized the provision of humanitarian aid “to help save Iraqi civilians stranded on the mountain” without food and water.

# US clears air missiles sales to Turkish army

Hurriyet Daily News, 14.08.2014



The United States has cleared a potential \$320 million advanced medium-range air-to-air missiles (AMRAAM) missiles sale to Turkey after the country demanded arms from its NATO ally amid increasing security risks in the region.

The U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) has announced that the State Department has approved a possible sale to Turkey for AIM-120C-7 AMRAAM missiles from Raytheon and associated equipment, parts, training and logistical support for an estimated cost of \$320 million, a statement released by the agency on its website said.

Turkey has requested 145 AMRAAMs, 10 missile guidance sections, and 40 LAU-129 launchers, containers, support equipment, spare and repair parts, integration activities, publications and technical documentation, test equipment, personnel training and training equipment, U.S. government and contractor logistics, engineering and technical support and other related elements or logistical and program support. The statement said the sale was consistent with the “U.S. national interests of assisting its NATO ally in developing and maintaining a strong and ready self-defense.”

“The Turkish Air Force (THK) intends to obtain these missiles to modernize its inventory, which will support its own air defense needs and improve its interoperability with the U.S. and other NATO allies,” the statement said. Under U.S. law, this kind of military equipment sale to an allied country is carried out automatically unless at least one senator formally requests a hold on the sale within two weeks following the DSCA’s notification. No such opposition is expected in this case.

According to the announcement, the missiles will be used on the F-16 aircraft – and eventually F-35 aircraft – in the Turkish army’s inventory and will maintain the THK’s air-to-air capability to defend its extensive coastline and borders against future threats. “The proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region,” it said. “The implementation of this proposed sale will require multiple trips to Turkey involving U.S. government and contractor representatives for technical reviews/support, program management and training. U.S. contractor representatives will be required in Turkey for integration, testing, and training. The number and duration are unknown and will be determined during contract negotiations,” it said.

# Iraq: US plans rescue mission for besieged Yazidi refugees

The Guardian, 11.08.2014



The U.S. is exploring options to evacuate thousands of Iraqi civilians trapped on a mountain in northern Iraq by Islamic militants after four nights of humanitarian relief airdrops. At least half of the 40,000 people besieged by jihadists on Mount Sinjar had escaped by Sunday night, aided by Kurdish rebels who crossed from Syria to rescue them.

But proposals for a mission to save the remaining thousands of Yazidi people underscore the limits of the airdrops, ordered by Obama. "We're reviewing options for removing the remaining civilians off the mountain," deputy US national security adviser Ben Rhodes told Reuters late on Sunday.

"Kurdish forces are helping, and we're talking to the (United Nations) and other international partners about how to bring them to a safe space." The refugees, all members of the Yazidi sect, began streaming back into Iraqi Kurdistan on Sunday after a perilous journey past Islamic State militants who had vowed to kill them and had surrounded their hideout on Mount Sinjar after storming the area. The day-long trek took them first over a mountain range into Syria, then through the Peshkhabour crossing three hours north-west of Irbil, where Kurdish officials were rushing to provide food and shelter. Fleeing Yazidis said their escape had been aided by the YPG, a Syrian Kurdish rebel faction, and by US air strikes on Islamic State (Isis) positions which had forced the jihadists to withdraw for around six hours on Saturday.

Their retreat gave a window for thousands of Yazidis, all desperately low on food and water, to begin streaming down the mile-high mountain and north across the Nineveh plains, which have been an ancient homeland of Iraqi minorities. The past week has uprooted Yazidis, Christians, Turkmen and Shabak Shias from lands in which they had lived for several thousand years, in a near-fatal blow to Iraq's pluralist past. Thousands are now sleeping rough in public spaces near Duhok, while others have reached Yazidi villages further to the south, where starved hordes, many in tattered clothes, were carrying plastic bags containing all they could salvage from their homes as the jihadists rampaged towards them.

Though many Yazidis have now reached safety, the siege of Mount Sinjar is not yet broken; many thousands more are thought to remain on the southern side of the 60-mile-long ridge, unable to reach the safe passage that the Kurdish fighters had secured towards the Kurdish north. The US military confirmed it had carried out four air strikes on Islamic State positions on Saturday. Britain said it had airdropped food and water to those still trapped. Iraq and Turkey, along with the US, had also delivered aid. However, Yazidis said much of the food and water dropped by the US using parachutes had disintegrated when it hit the ground. On Sunday, a Kurdish official told Reuters that Kurdish forces had taken back two towns in northern Iraq from Isis militants.



Hoshiyar Zebari, who claimed the forces had been supported by the US air strikes, said the Kurds had recaptured the towns of Guwair and Makhmur. Asked how long the US would have to continue strikes to help the Kurds defeat Isis, Zebari said: "As President Obama said, there is no time limit." Barakat Issa, a Yazidi who arrived in Iraqi Kurdish on Saturday, began his journey before the mass exodus, when Kurdish guerrillas were still trying to secure a route. "It's beyond a catastrophe," he said. "We were escaping death and heading to another death. There was a three-year-old child with me that had to walk eight hours non-stop in very rough terrain.

"The journey was impossible. Difficult is not even close to describing it. There are two more Yazidi villages still besieged – the people couldn't leave and Isis gave them a deadline that ends very soon to convert to Islam or to face the sword. Even if they convert to Islam Isis would force the men to join their fighters and give their women to them." Yazidis who have fled to Irbil say at least 400 women and children have been captured by jihadists who have taken some to Syria and others to Sinjar. Western officials believe some are being held in schools near the border and are facing demands to convert to Islam. The Islamic State believes Yazidis to be devil worshippers and has vowed to kill those who do not convert to Sunni Islam.

Despite the clear danger, desperate hunger drove some of the men who escaped the mountain to attempt to steal food from jihadists along the way. "Many died of thirst," said Barakat Issa. "And at night some of the men would sneak towards the surrounding Isis-controlled villages and attempt to steal some cattle to take back to the hungry people, but this created an issue, because red meat makes you thirsty and it's very hard to get water in this mountain except for some remote parts that have groundwater." Risalah Shirkani, a Yazidi woman who escaped to Duhok, in Iraq's Kurdish north, said: "This is not the first time this has happened to us. History is a witness to that. After this ordeal, Yazidis don't feel safe in Iraq, or even in Kurdish any more. It's only a matter of time until we all leave. "Some of my relatives were kidnapped by Isis. Others were beheaded and yet more fell off the mountain. There were pregnant women giving birth and children dying from dehydration, diarrhoea and fever."

Iraq's human rights minister, Muhammad Shia al-Sudani, estimated that around 500 Yazidis had been killed in the past week, many by jihadists when they stormed the city of Sinjar early last Sunday. Others, though, had died of dehydration and disease. Unicef says at least 40 of the dead are children. The figures were impossible to confirm, but matched eyewitness tallies during the desperate days of deprivation on the mountaintop. Issa Pajo, 27, who arrived over the weekend in the town of Duhok, near the Syrian border, said: "We have been on the way for two days until we reached Duhok. The Syrian Kurds treated us well – they gave us food. But we also have nothing here. We don't have a place to sleep and we have not seen any assistance from anyone.

Isis destroyed everything. They killed my cousin and looted our houses." Another man who made it to Duhok, Ghassan Salim, 40, said: "The situation is critical. It is a human catastrophe. The children are in particular need of urgent assistance. And it is not only Yazidis – all the minorities, like Shabbak, Christians ... need desperate help." Those who have been unable to leave Mount Sinjar face an equally perilous journey to reach aid, which according to Barakat Issa is being dropped on a peak that was used by the Iraqi and US militaries. "It was a US base and before that it was a missile base during Saddam's time, the same platform he used to launch rockets against Israel. That was the main drop-landing zone for the aid despite the fact that Isis are not deep in the mountains. "The drops didn't reach more than 10% of those who need them.

Helicopters and pilots were afraid to come close to the southern part of the mountain – thousands of people in that part received nothing.” After more than a week of losing ground, and facing accusations that they had left the Yazidis to their fate, Kurdish forces on Sunday regained three villages 25 miles south-west of Irbil, which Isis fighters had been trying to seize. Regular peshmerga fighters were vastly outnumbered by irregulars who rushed to the frontline carrying ageing Kalashnikovs. Waiting under the roof of a sprawling checkpoint, just over a mile from the frontline, Rashid Kherjari, a retired peshmerga fighter, said he had five sons further down the road.

“We have faced three big enemies in my lifetime,” he said: Saddam’s Ba’athists, the Iraqi prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, and now Isis. “Maliki is the worst,” he added. “But we are fighting against blind bats in these guys.” Jets rumbled through the sky in the middle distance and a slow trickle of injured were ferried by ambulance back from the frontline. “We will win this battle,” said another volunteer fighter, his belly hanging over his trousers. “All Kurds are peshmerga when it really matters.” After they had rolled unopposed through the Nineveh plains and advanced rapidly towards Irbil, the momentum of the jihadists slowed over the weekend.

“The US airstrikes helped, but Isis remains potent,” said the Kurdish regional government’s former prime minister, Barham Salih. Kurdish officials have urged the US to keep up its attacks on the Islamic State, claiming a short campaign could end up empowering the jihadists. On Sunday the president of Iraqi Kurdish, Masoud Barzani, asked the international community to provide the Kurds with weapons to bolster their battle against Isis, whose dramatic push through the north has alarmed Baghdad and western countries. Speaking at a press conference with the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, Barzani said: “We are not fighting a terrorist organisation, we are fighting a terrorist state.”

## John Kerry insists any US moves in Iraq will not involve combat troops

The Guardian, 12.08.2014



US combat forces will not re-enter Iraq, John Kerry insists, but the US says it will explore more “political, economic and security options” as the country transitions out of political deadlock with a new prime minister. The secretary of state said the US government congratulated Haider al-Abadi on his nomination, and he urged him to form a new, inclusive and functional cabinet “as swiftly as possible”.

With Nouri al-Maliki effectively deposed overnight by Iraq’s president in favour of the rival Shia candidate, Kerry said the Obama administration stood ready to “fully support a new and inclusive Iraqi government”.



Kerry said the government in Iraq needed to create circumstances where the “forces of Iraq are not a personal force defined by one particular sect and sworn to allegiance to one particular leader, but .. truly represent Iraq”. With a new “inclusive, participatory” government in Baghdad, the US would “absolutely look to provide additional options” to help stabilise the country. Kerry made it clear this did not mean a return of US combat troops. “There will be no reintroduction of American combat forces into Iraq,” he said. “Nobody, I think, is looking forwards to a return to the road that we’ve travelled. “What we’re really looking for here is a way to support Iraq, support their forces with either training or equipment or assistance of one kind or another, that can help them to stand on their own two feet and defend their nation.

“That’s the goal. That’s where the conversation begins.” Having failed on Monday to rule out supporting the US if Washington muscled up militarily in Iraq, Australia’s defence minister, David Johnston, made it clear on Tuesday that any Australian involvement would be confined to providing humanitarian assistance through air drops around the Kurdish city of Irbil. “That’s the role that we will carry out,” Johnston said. “We’ll fit into and be part of the planning of the United States and other partners who want to assist on that humanitarian basis. That’s the way we’ll go forward.” Australia’s opposition leader, Bill Shorten, had argued on Tuesday there was no case for Australian forces to return to Iraq. Shorten, in public remarks before a meeting with Kerry late on Tuesday local time, highlighted Labor’s “principled stand” against the 2003 invasion.

The Ausmin talks – a regular gathering of foreign and defence ministers from Australia and the US – also resolved to take a joint proposal to the United Nations to combat the domestic security threats posed by returning jihadists from the sectarian conflicts in the Middle East. The Australian government has announced it will bring forward a package of legislative changes designed to make it easier to prosecute Australian-born fighters taking part in terrorist acts overseas. The Coalition is yet to produce legislation, or fully fleshed out proposals, but in principle the changes would include a reversed onus of proof. The government has indicated that any Australians returning from designated regions – such as Iraq and Syria – will have to prove they were in the region for a legitimate purpose.

The meeting of US and Australian officials in Sydney included a lengthy discussion about foreign fighters, and a resolution that the US and Australia take a “best practice” proposal to the UN. “We have a responsibility to take this to the United Nations and to the world so that all countries involved take measures ahead of time to prevent the return of these fighters and the chaos and havoc that could come with that,” Kerry said on Tuesday. Australia’s foreign minister, Julie Bishop, said if the international community could “exchange ideas and practices and suggestions as to how we can deal with it, then I think we will have made a great step forward”. “And so we certainly will support the United States and work very hard to ensure that we collectively deal with this growing threat to the security of our nation,” Bishop said.

## U.S. directly arming Kurds in Iraq

CNN, 11.08.2014



The Obama administration has shipped weapons directly to Kurdish forces battling ISIS militants in northern Iraq and is considering ways to expand the transfer of arms, U.S. officials told CNN. Shipments have so far come from the CIA, two U.S. officials said.

But discussions are underway inside the administration about whether the Defense Department might get involved. The Pentagon and the State departments do not sell or transfer weapons to non-state entities, but the administration is looking at whether there is a way around that restriction, one official said.

“We’re working with the government of Iraq to increasingly and very quickly get urgently needed arms to the Kurds,” State Department deputy spokeswoman Marie Harf told CNN’s New Day on Monday. In a separate statement, Harf said the Iraqi government “has made deliveries from its own stock, and we have done the same.” She said such efforts are being done in “full coordination” with the government in Baghdad. Since last Thursday, the Iraqi government has transferred three shipments of arms and ammunition to the Kurds, one of the officials said.

In addition, there have been other shipments from the CIA, the official said. The CIA shipments are useful because the Kurdish fighters -- known as the Peshmerga -- use different arms and ammunition than the U.S. military stocks, so the intelligence agency is better equipped to get that type of material to the Kurds quickly. One official noted more arms could come from other countries in consultation with the United States

# Iraqi President appoints new prime minister

CNN, 11.08.2014



Iraq's president appointed a new prime minister on Monday, further complicating the country's intense power struggle amid a dire humanitarian crisis and a militant threat strong enough to draw U.S. air power back to the fray.

President Fuad Masum appointed Haider al-Abadi as the country's prime minister, replacing a defiant Nuri al-Maliki with a member of his own party. It wasn't clear whether al-Maliki would peacefully relinquish power or what impact the situation would have on the country, which is already torn by a threat from Islamist militants so brutal that they crucify people and brag about it online.

"I've never seen Iraq so bad -- ever," CNN national security analyst and former CIA operative Bob Baer said Monday, before the latest political developments. Here's where things stand after a few days of dizzying developments: The new Prime Minister-designate, al-Abadi, is the deputy speaker of the Iraqi Parliament and a former aide to al-Maliki. Masum appointed the prominent Shiite politician as prime minister on Monday despite al-Maliki's pronouncement earlier in the day that he intends to stay in office for a third term. On Sunday, Iraqi forces and tanks surged into some Baghdad neighborhoods as a wave of troops swarmed Baghdad's green zone, the secure area where many government buildings and the U.S. Embassy are located, two Iraqi police officials said.

Exactly what led to the surge remains unclear. But some believe the beefed-up military presence was part of a power struggle between al-Maliki and Masum. Al-Maliki has accused Masum of violating the country's constitution by extending the deadline for Iraq's biggest political coalitions to nominate a candidate for prime minister. "You've got Nuri al-Maliki refusing to step down. Now he's mobilized not just security troops loyal to him, but now he's mobilized army units to put tanks in the streets," said retired Lt. Col. Rick Francona, a CNN military analyst. "It looks like he's trying to lock down the city in some sort of confrontation with the President, so this does not portend well."

Al-Abadi's appointment was met with approval from U.N. and U.S. officials. Nikolay Mladenov, the special representative of the United Nations secretary-general for Iraq, welcomed the decision and urged swift movement toward appointment of a new government. "It is important now for all political groups in Parliament to cooperate in forming an inclusive government that reflects the wishes of the Iraqi people for security, prosperity and democracy," Mladenov said. U.S. State Department official Brett McGurk tweeted Monday that the U.S. was also happy with the news. "This is an important additional step in the government formation process as set forth in the Iraqi constitution," McGurk, the deputy assistant secretary of state for near-Eastern affairs, wrote on Twitter. On Sunday, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf made it clear which side the United States is supporting. "The United States fully supports President Fuad Masum in his role as guarantor of the Iraqi constitution," she said.



“We reaffirm our support for a process to select a prime minister who can represent the aspirations of the Iraqi people by building a national consensus and governing in an inclusive manner. We reject any effort to achieve outcomes through coercion or manipulation of the constitutional or judicial process.” Al-Maliki is a Shiite; Masum is a Kurd. Baer said parts of Baghdad support ISIS, which refers to itself as the Islamic State. “The fear is ISIS will take advantage of this and make a move on Baghdad.” An initial assessment shows that several days of U.S. airstrikes against ISIS targets have dispersed the group’s fighters and forced them to travel more discreetly, a U.S. official who was not authorized to speak publicly told CNN on Monday. The airstrikes also appear to have at least temporarily stopped the militant advance on Irbil, the official said.

“They had been acting with impunity,” the official said. “Now they realize they cannot travel up and down the roads in large groups.” U.S. aircraft struck ISIS targets again on Sunday, hitting five targets, including armed vehicles and a mortar position, U.S. Central Command said. Iraqi officials said U.S. airstrikes Saturday killed 16 ISIS fighters, and an Iraqi airstrike in Sinjar killed an additional 45 ISIS fighters, Iraq state media reported. Last week, U.S. President Barack Obama authorized targeted attacks to protect not only Iraqi minorities from ISIS’s killing rampage but Americans stationed in the Kurdish regional capital of Irbil.

In their effort to create a caliphate across parts of Iraq and Syria, ISIS fighters have slaughtered civilians as they take over cities in both countries. In Iraq, one of the most dire humanitarian nightmares is unfolding on Mount Sinjar, where tens of thousands of Yazidis have been trapped. Yazidis are part of one of the world’s oldest monotheistic religious minorities and have been targeted by ISIS. Their religion is considered a pre-Islamic sect that draws from Christianity, Judaism and the ancient monotheistic religion of Zoroastrianism. Dozens of people, including 60 children, have died on the mountain, where the Yazidis are battling extreme temperatures, hunger and thirst. On Sunday, Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights spokesman Kamil Amin said it was possible that as many as 500 Yazidis had been killed. The ministry had also heard reports -- but had not confirmed -- that some had been buried alive.

Although the situation remains dire, U.S. officials believe they have stopped ISIS expeditions on the mountain, according to the U.S. official who spoke to CNN about the effect of airstrikes. Who are the Yazidis? Why does ISIS want to kill them? “It’s difficult to be accurate about these numbers, but initially we have reported 500 Iraqi Yazidis have died from either ISIS direct killings or from starvation and dehydration,” Amin said. “We have heard some reports from activists and local journalists that some families were buried alive.” CNN is unable to authenticate reports about the Yazidi death toll or the allegation that some were buried alive.

But some hope emerged Sunday when 20,000 Yazidi Iraqis who had been trapped on Mount Sinjar were rescued and taken to the Syrian-Iraqi border. Amin said Kurdish forces were able to break the siege by ISIS and help thousands of stranded Yazidis board trucks, which drove them to the Syrian border town of Hasaka. They were then driven north along the Syrian-Iraqi border to Dohuk in northern Iraq’s Kurdish region. On Sunday night, the U.S. military made a fourth airdrop of food and water to Iraqis stranded on Mount Sinjar, according to U.S. Central Command. In total, U.S. military aircraft have delivered more than 74,000 meals and more than 15,000 gallons of fresh drinking water, Centcom said. Britain and France have said they will join the United States in the airdrops. A British C-130 cargo plane delivered aid to Iraq on Sunday, a Ministry of Defense spokesman said.

# Obama applauds nomination of new Iraqi PM as 'step forward'

Hurriyet Daily News, 12.08.2014



U.S. President Barack Obama said on Aug. 11 Iraq had taken “a promising step forward” in designating a new prime minister, vowing to step up support for a new Iraqi government in a widening conflict.

Obama said Iraq had made important strides toward rebuffing fighters from the Islamic State, an al-Qaeda offshoot, since the United States authorized air strikes last week. He urged the quick formation of an inclusive government to address the needs of all Iraqis.” Today Iraq took a promising step forward in this critical effort,” Obama mentioned in brief remarks.

Obama’s comments and a congratulatory telephone call he made to Iraqi Prime Minister-designate Haider al-Abadi signal the administration’s expectation, or hope, that Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki’s 8-year-rule is all but over, even as Maliki shows no sign of relinquishing power. “They’re treating him like he’s the prime minister already,” Michael Knights, a Boston-based fellow and Iraq scholar at the Washington Institute, said of Abadi. “Now the U.S. can press on with its offer of enhanced security cooperation with Iraq.” Maliki, a Shiite Muslim Islamist blamed by Washington for driving the alienated Sunni minority into a revolt that is fueling the Islamic State’s brutal insurgency, deployed militias and special forces on the streets on Monday in a potentially dangerous political showdown.

Obama urged Abadi to quickly form a new cabinet that represents Iraq’s different ethnic and religious communities. “This new Iraqi leadership has a difficult task,” Obama said. “It has to regain the confidence of its citizens by governing inclusively and by taking steps to demonstrate its resolve.” Abadi, a deputy speaker and veteran of Maliki’s Dawa Party, was named by President Fouad Masoum on Monday to replace Maliki. Obama’s comments underline what one former U.S. official described as a potential “sea change” in Washington’s ties with Baghdad if Abadi forms a government following increasing U.S. disenchantment with Maliki, who Washington backed as prime minister in 2006 when a Sunni insurgency raged and again in 2010 for a second term.

“The U.S. will finally have a partner in Baghdad,” said Wayne White, a scholar at the Middle East Institute in Washington and a former senior State Department intelligence official. Born in Baghdad in 1952, Abadi was a trained electrical engineer before entering Iraq’s government after the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. He was part of the political opposition to late dictator Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime and lived in Britain for many years. Two of his siblings were executed in 1982 for their membership in the then-outlawed Dawa party. James Jeffrey, who served as the U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 2010 to 2012, said he had met Abadi in Baghdad and believed he was “someone the United States could work with.” He said that Abadi’s main strength was that “he’s not Maliki” and has not alienated groups across the Iraqi political spectrum.

He predicted that Maliki would resist but not be able to hold onto power. Too many forces inside Iraq, including the country's Shia establishment in the city of Najaf, have turned against Maliki, he added. Jeffrey said that while some Iraqi army units remain personally loyal to Maliki, the presence of 600 American advisers make it difficult for Maliki to get all of Iraq's security forces to act on his behalf. "He's really trapped." A U.S. official said that to his knowledge the United States had not played a role in the selection of Abadi.

"We were sufficiently burned by the interference and choice of Maliki that people around here are not into king-making," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "In this case, he was pretty much chosen by the (Iraqi) process and everybody is pretty relieved that they have chosen somebody and that it was not Maliki." Obama late last week authorized air strikes in Iraq to protect U.S. personnel in Arbil from the Islamic State, a Sunni fundamentalist militant group that has swept through northern Iraq, and to ensure that members of the Yazidi sect were not subject to systematic violence at the hands of the militants. The air strikes carried out so far are the first direct U.S. military action in Iraq since the Obama administration completed its withdrawal of U.S. troops at the end of 2011.

## Nuri al-Maliki ends bid to continue as Iraq's prime minister

CNN, 15.08.2014



Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki gave up the fight Thursday to keep his post, clearing the way for a new leader that many hope can hold Iraq together as the country battles brutal extremist fighters. In a televised address, al-Maliki withdrew his candidacy for a third term and endorsed the Prime Minister-designate, bringing to an end a political battle that just days ago saw him vow to hold onto power as he ordered tanks into the streets.

"I announce to you today that I am withdrawing my candidacy in deference to my brother, Haider al-Abadi, in the highest interest of the country," he said.

The news -- first flashed on state television -- follows mounting pressure, at home and abroad, for al-Maliki to step aside and make way for someone to bridge the sectarian divide that many accuse him of fomenting. The move comes at a critical time in Iraq as Sunni fighters with the so-called Islamic State, formerly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, force hundreds of thousands from their homes as they seize large swaths of land. Al-Maliki's announcement came the same day that U.S. President Barack Obama declared the ISIS siege that trapped thousands in the Sinjar Mountains over, but warned the crisis is far from solved. While humanitarian airdrops and U.S. airstrikes saved those stranded from starving and provided safe passage off out of the mountains, the Yazidis arrived by the thousands at camps in and outside Iraq.



Al-Maliki will continue to serve as the country's caretaker Prime Minister -- as well as its top military commander -- until al-Abadi forms a new government. Al-Maliki's acquiescence was a turnaround for the man, who in recent days called the appointment of al-Abadi unconstitutional and said he would not step down. He had gone so far as to file a lawsuit in federal court to stop the formation of a new government and ordered tanks and soldiers loyal to him into the streets of Baghdad, raising concerns of a possible coup. But with world leaders, diplomats, members of his own political party and the country's most revered Shiite cleric pressuring him to step down, al-Maliki gave up the fight. Calling it an "honorable decision" by al-Maliki, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry urged al-Abadi to move quickly to form the government, saying it is essential to pulling the country's various ethnic and religious groups together to fight a common enemy in ISIS.

While Iraq works to seat a new government, Obama said in a televised address on Thursday that the United States will continue to conduct airstrikes to protect U.S. personnel and facilities. The United States carried out airstrikes Thursday against three ISIS targets northeast of the Kurdish regional capital of Irbil, according to the U.S. Central Command. The targets were U.S.-manufactured mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles, more commonly known as MRAPs, and other armored vehicles being driven by ISIS fighters. The vehicles are believed to have been seized by ISIS after it routed Iraqi troops in northern Iraq. Also, there were reports that ISIS fighters were advancing south and west of Kirkuk, about 240 kilometers (149 miles) north of Baghdad.

At the same time, Obama urged Iraq's Shiite-dominated government to seize "the enormous opportunity of forming a new inclusive government" under al-Abadi. "He still has a challenging task in putting a government together, but we are modestly hopeful that the Iraqi government situation is moving in the right direction," he said. The new battleground in Iraq appeared to be spreading to the south and west of Kirkuk, where ISIS fighters occupied four towns to the south and west of Kirkuk, according to Hisham al-Hashimi, a researcher at the Journalistic Freedom Observatory. According to his sources in the field, there was fighting ongoing between ISIS and Kurdish fighters, known as Peshmerga, in the town of Tuz Khurmatu. The town is home to a number of Turkmen.

The United Nations estimates that more than 400,000 people have been driven from their homes since June, when ISIS swept across the border from Syria into Iraq. Of those displaced, more than 200,000 have poured into northern Dohuk province in recent weeks, where refugee camp populations have swelled since ISIS began its assault against Yazidis, Christians, Kurds and Shiites. Thousands of other refugees sought protection inside the northern Kurdish region of Iraq. "To be blunt, we don't have housing for all of them. We don't have shelter," a spokesman for the U.N. human rights commissioner, Edward Colt, said at a camp near the Peshkhabour bridge where Iraqis are entering the area.

"Thousands of tents are being erected as we speak." Yazidi refugees were also fleeing across the Iraqi border into Syria. As of Thursday, there were about 15,000 Yazidi refugees from Iraq who arrived at the Newroz camp in Syria, the U.N. refugee agency said. Thousands more are arriving, the agency said. The Yazidis fled last week in the Sinjar Mountains as ISIS overran the city of Sinjar. A senior commander said ISIS fighters abducted more than 100 Yazidi women and children from the community. The ISIS commander, who has knowledge of the events that unfolded, said the fighters killed a large number of men when they took over the town more than a week ago. "At that time, they took Yazidi women and children, and I can confirm those women and children have entered Mosul," the commander said by telephone.

# Israeli delegation arrives in Cairo for truce talks

Hurriyet Daily News, 11.08.2014



**T**An Israeli delegation arrived in Cairo on Aug. 11 for indirect negotiations with Palestinians on a durable truce in Gaza, Egypt and Israeli officials said. The Palestinian delegation meanwhile was already locked in talks with Egyptian intelligence mediators, who will relay their demands to the Israeli negotiators, a Palestinian official said.

**T**he Israeli delegation landed in Cairo in the morning, hours after a 72-hour ceasefire went into effect. Almost 12 hours into the truce, the skies over Gaza remained calm, with signs of life emerging on the streets of the war-torn coastal enclave which is home to 1.8 million Palestinians.

If The agreement, which began at 00:01 am (2101 GMT on Sunday), clinched days of frantic mediation to stem a firestorm of violence that has killed 1,939 Palestinians and 67 on the Israeli side since July 8. Minutes before the truce began, Hamas's armed wing claimed it fired "several" rockets at Israel, including one at Tel Aviv. There were no immediate reports of any damage. Egypt urged Israel and the Palestinians to use the new truce to "reach a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire", after an earlier three-day truce collapsed on Friday. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also said he hoped it would give the two sides "another chance to agree on a durable ceasefire for the benefit of all civilian populations and as a starting point to address the underlying grievances on both sides", a statement from his spokesman said.

"The United Nations stands ready to assist in the implementation of an agreement that would consolidate peace and allow for much needed reconstruction and development of Gaza," the statement added. The ceasefire must lead to the lifting by Israel of its blockade of the Gaza Strip, Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal told AFP in an exclusive interview in Doha on Sunday. "We insist on this goal," he said. "In the case of Israeli procrastination or continued aggression, Hamas is ready with other Palestinian factions to resist on the ground and politically," he added. Veteran Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat arrived in Cairo Sunday night for talks with Egyptian and Arab League officials on behalf of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, an airport official said. Israel said its team would only return to Cairo once the truce went into force.

"If there is a full ceasefire on the ground the Israeli delegation will arrive in Egypt tomorrow," an Israeli government official said Sunday night. Palestinian delegates in Cairo told reporters that they were happy for the Palestinian Authority, headed by president Mahmud Abbas, to take over the reconstruction of Gaza and execute any agreement reached. Israel refuses to deal with Hamas, branding it a terrorist organization. "The national unity government and the Palestinian Authority will take over the execution of all that will be agreed upon during the truce talks," Azzam al-Ahmed, head of the Palestinian delegation, told reporters.

“We are backing the setting up of a national body to be formed by president Abbas, which will take over the reconstruction (of Gaza),” said senior Hamas official Ezzat al-Rishq. “The president of the body should be professional, credible and one who will be accepted internationally.” Seven Gazans, including a woman and two 17-year-olds, were killed on the eve of the truce in a barrage of Israeli air strikes, and another 10 bodies were pulled from the rubble of previous strikes east of Gaza City, local medics said. Hamas had refused to extend the 72-hour lull when it expired on Friday, and Israel accused the Islamist faction of breaching the agreement in its final hours with rocket attacks. In the gap between ceasefires, warplanes hit more than 170 targets, killing at least 19 people, while the Palestinians fired at least 136 rockets at Israel, of which 93 hit and 13 were shot down, with the rest falling short inside Gaza, the army said. The UN says just under three quarters of those killed in Gaza were civilians. Around a third of the civilian victims were children.

In Deir al-Balah, angry young men bellowed slogans as they carried the bloodied body of a 17-year-old to its grave. The Israeli army described the youth as a “prominent terror operative”. “God loves martyrs! We will march on Jerusalem in our millions,” chanted mourners. Israel said it closed its Kerem Shalom crossing used to truck supplies into the southern Gaza Strip after it was struck twice by rocket fire. “Israel will not engage in negotiations under fire,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told his cabinet on Sunday, warning the operation would not stop until there was a prolonged quiet. In the West Bank, an 11-year-old Palestinian boy was shot dead by Israeli troops as he played outside his home in Al-Fawwar refugee camp near the southern city of Hebron, relatives and medics said. The army said troops had opened fire during a “violent riot”, but it has opened an investigation into the circumstances of the shooting. The resumption of fighting had put Netanyahu under increased pressure from hardliners to send ground troops back in to Gaza to topple Hamas.

## Israeli cabinet agrees to Gaza ceasefire extension

Anadolu Agency, 13.08.2014



Israel’s security cabinet has agreed to extend a temporary ceasefire in the Gaza Strip by 72 hours if respected by Palestinian factions, Israeli sources said Wednesday. “The cabinet agreed to extend the ceasefire by 72 hours if Palestinian factions abided by the extension,” the sources were quoted as saying by Israeli Channel Two.

No official statement, however, was issued to confirm the approval. A three-day ceasefire brokered by Egypt between the Palestinian factions and Israel expires with the end of Wednesday, unless renewed or replaced by a durable ceasefire deal.

Palestinian factions have linked any permanent ceasefire to Israel’s approval of their demands, including the lifting of a years-long blockade on the Gaza Strip and allowing the establishment of a seaport, among others.

According to Israeli Channel 10, Israeli negotiators returned to Israel on Wednesday from Cairo after the end of indirect talks with Palestinian factions. Israel has already begun amassing troops near the border with the Gaza Strip. The army said it had moved infantry, artillery and combat forces from what it called “assembly areas” to “assessment areas” for anticipated operational deployments. At least 1951 Palestinians – mostly civilians – have been killed and more than 10,000 injured in Israeli attacks since July 7. Within the same period, at least 64 Israeli soldiers have been killed in battles with Palestinian fighters inside Gaza, while three civilians have been killed by Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel.

## Turkish aid for Gaza begins via Rafah

Anadolu Agency, 15.08.2014



The Turkish Red Crescent is the only aid organisation being allowed by Egyptian authorities to deliver aid through the Rafah crossing since it was opened on Thursday, according to the organisation and the Egyptian foreign ministry.

Turkey’s biggest humanitarian aid organisation will deliver its first aid package to the people of Gaza in next few days via the Rafah border crossing, which was opened up by Egypt on Thursday for aid only. The Turkish Red Crescent said they had been in talks with the Egyptian Foreign Ministry from the beginning of the recent Israeli bombardment asking them to open the crossing.

Located on the border between Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, the Rafah border terminal represents Gaza’s only window to the outside world that is not under Israeli control. The closure has added to the suffering of Gazan people since July 7 when Israel launched its so-called “Operation Protective Edge” -- one of its deadliest-ever offensives against the Gaza Strip -- with the alleged aim of halting rocket attacks from Gaza. Thanks to the extended temporary cease-fire between Palestinian factions and Israel after last week’s Egypt-brokered talks, the Turkish Red Crescent has so far managed to airdrop 20 tons of humanitarian aid, which includes 3,000 food packages, thousands of beds and water to provide showers along with drugs and other medical necessities, for Gaza’s beleaguered civilian population.

The crossing, which is used to bring persons, foodstuffs and medicine into Gaza, was closed ‘indefinitely’ a year ago by Egyptian authorities after the coup that ousted Mohamed Morsi. The 1.8 million Gazans have complained that the crossings closure makes their suffering -- induced by Israel’s blockade of the Gaza Strip -- even worse. Egypt’s army-backed authorities generally only open the crossing for exceptional cases and for limited periods of time.

# Escalating tensions with Russia threaten eurozone recovery

Financial Times, 11.08.2014



Strained relations with Russia over conflict in Ukraine “have hit confidence in Germany”, complicating economic recovery in the eurozone, the UK’s Financial Times newspaper said on Monday, quoting economists polled by Reuters news agency.

European Central Bank president Mario Draghi was cited as saying that further breakdown of relations with Russia “would weaken growth in the second half of the year”. The region’s recovery already looked fragile with Italy which is the eurozone’s third-largest economy back in recession and the French economy which is remaining weak, according to the paper.

“There are also signs momentum in the German economy, which provides more than a quarter of the currency area’s output, has halted,” it said, reporting polled economists as saying that the region’s economic powerhouse failed to grow at all in the second quarter. Ukraine’s crisis triggered a sharp slump in factory orders in June, as well as a decline in business confidence, the paper said. Joerg Kraemer, chief economist at Commerzbank, was quoted as saying, “It’s not the end of the upswing, but it’s a reminder that there are certain risks from emerging markets.” “Germany is highly export driven. It can’t be immune from what is going on outside,” Kraemer concluded.

## Poroshenko and Obama discuss Ukraine

Anadolu Agency, 12.08.2014



The European Union and Ukraine have agreed to send humanitarian aid to war-torn Luhansk, in addition to the convoy being sent from Russia. Following a phone call between EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko, both agreed to send a convoy with the assistance of the Red Cross, Poroshenko said on Monday.

Luhansk is one of two areas controlled by pro-Russia separatists in eastern Ukraine. The civilian population is facing severe shortages as government forces encircle rebel fighters.

In a statement, Poroshenko said: "A large number of parties are ready to participate in the process to reach a settlement of the crisis in eastern Ukraine." He added that he hoped the "issue of Ukraine" would be discussed at an EU meeting at the end of the month. Barroso said he supported Poroshenko's "humanitarian mission." He announced 2.5 million euros in humanitarian aid for Ukraine. The commission president also held separate talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday.

According to a statement, he urged Russia "to use its influence to ensure that civilian populations could safely and freely leave areas of conflict controlled by illegal armed groups." United States President Barack Obama has discussed the planned aid missions to eastern Ukraine with the country's President Petro Poroshenko. A statement from the Ukrainian presidency said Monday's telephone conversation focused on organizing aid to Luhansk with the assistance of the Red Cross, the European Union, Russia and Germany. At least 1,500 people have been killed during the three-month conflict after separatists declared their intention to break away from Ukraine.

# Russian aid convoy 'will not be admitted into Ukraine'

The Guardian, 12.08.2014



A Ukrainian security spokesman has said that a humanitarian convoy being dispatched to eastern Ukraine by Russia will not be admitted into the country. Andriy Lysenko, a spokesman for Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, said the convoy had not been certified by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

A convoy of 280 Russian trucks headed for Ukraine early on Tuesday, one day after agreement was reached on an international humanitarian relief mission. But the Red Cross, said it had no information on what the trucks were carrying or where they were going.

That has raised fears in Ukraine and the west, where leaders have voiced concerns that Russia could use the initiative as a pretext for sending troops into separatist-held territory. An aide to the Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, said Kiev would require the aid to be reloaded onto other transport vehicles at the border by the Red Cross if it was to enter. "We will not allow any escort by the emergencies ministry of Russia or by the military. Everything will be under the control of the Ukrainian side," the aide, Valery Chaly, said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Itar Tass news agency had said the convoy departed from near Moscow, meaning it would take it a couple of days to arrive in east Ukraine, about 620 miles (1,000km) to the south-west. "It has all been agreed with Ukraine," Business FM radio quoted President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, as saying. Thousands of people are said to be short of water, electricity and medical aid due to the fighting. The US president, Barack Obama, has said any Russian intervention without Kiev's consent would be unacceptable and violate international law.

The European commission president, Jose Manuel Barroso, warned on Monday "against any unilateral military actions in Ukraine, under any pretext, including humanitarian". Russian state television Rossiya 24 showed several heavy white trucks departing from the town of Alabino near Moscow. A correspondent at the scene said the convoy should arrive at the Ukrainian border in two to three days where it would meet representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Russia has said the aid would be delivered together with the ICRC.

The ICRC said on Monday that it had submitted a document to Russian and Ukrainian officials. However the independent agency said it needed agreement from all parties as well as security guarantees to carry out the operation, as it does not use armed escorts. "The practical details of this operation need to be clarified before this initiative can move forward," said Laurent Corbaz, head of ICRC operations for Europe and central Asia. According to UN agencies more than 1,100 people have been killed including government forces, rebels and civilians in the four months since the separatists seized territory in the east and Kiev launched its crackdown.

# Ukrainian Rada plans to adopt bill envisaging more sanctions against Russia

ITAR-TASS, 12.08.2014



The Ukrainian Rada has met in plenary session Tuesday to discuss around 20 bills, including a bill on sanctions, which might entail far-reaching consequences for Ukraine itself and its relations with Russia.

The bill envisages measures of immediate response to the existing and potential threats to Ukraine, its national interests and security: for instance, blocking assets, limit trade transactions, fully or partly block transit of resources, ban flights and other transportation services, prevent exodus of capital, suspend or revoke financial liabilities and enforce other prohibitive measures.

These prohibitive measures are for example establishing control over mass media and Internet communications, banning ships and aircraft from calling at Ukrainian ports and flying in Ukrainian airspace, revoking trade transactions and joint projects in defense and security. "Ukrainian MP Nikolai Tomenko told journalists in the Rada lobbies Tuesday that the bill on sanctions would most likely be passed at first reading and returned to the Rada to be finalized. "We should reduce losses suffered by the Ukrainian economy to a minimum," Tomenko said.

The Rada agenda is also expected to include proposals on amending franchise by cutting the term of an election campaign from 60 to 45 days, which is presumed to be of particular importance because if no parliamentary majority is established by August 25 the Ukrainian president will be entitled to call extraordinary parliamentary election which might be held in mid-October already.

# Sanctions against Russia may cause collapse of Finland coalition government

ITAR-TASS, 13.08.2014



The EU sanctions imposed on Russia and Moscow's response action affected the Finnish economy. "The Finnish economy is thought by some economists not just to be in recession but in a depression. Sanctions both by and against Russia are hitting the Nordic country hard and there are continuing doubts about whether the government can survive until elections in April," according to Financial Times.

"The general approach is that we are between a rock and a hard place, but we will survive," the newspaper quoted Finnish Prime Minister Alexander Stubb, 46, leader of the center-right National Coalition party.

Pasi Sorjonen, an economist at Nordea who recently published a note called "Depression Is Here", says the economy could contract for four consecutive years from 2012-15. "It seems that getting back to the GDP volumes of 2008 will take 10 years. It's like a double recession," he says. Mr Stubb says the situation is similar to the 1990s when Finland faced a deep financial crisis before the rise of Nokia, FT writes. The country's current government is a coalition of five parties - the National Coalition Party, Social Democratic Party, Swedish People's Party, Green Union and Christian Democrats of Finland.

The newspaper says that the Social Democratic Party "has seen its poll ratings drop rapidly since changing leader a few months ago while the Green party has made threats it could leave the government over nuclear power." The daily also quotes Jukka Tarkka, a former MP and historian specializing in postwar Finland, who says the chance of snap elections in the autumn is a possibility. "Mr Stubb's first big task is to try to help the leader of the Social Democrats stay alive," Tarkka said.

# UK economic growth passes pre-crisis peak

The Guardian, 15.08.2014



Britain's economy powered on in the second quarter, recording its strongest growth since before the financial crisis, but economists warned the pressure was on UK consumers and businesses to sustain the recovery amid the threat of a triple-dip recession in the eurozone.

Growth between April and June was confirmed at 0.8% by the Office for National Statistics in its second estimate, in line with expectations. The last time the economy grew by more than 0.8% was the third quarter of 2007, before the global financial crisis took hold. GDP is now 0.2% above its pre-recession peak in the first quarter of 2008.

The annual growth rate was revised up from 3.1% to 3.2% – the strongest in more than six years. The Treasury said: “Today’s figures confirm that our economy has recovered all of the output lost in the ‘Great Recession’, and is now bigger than its previous peak in the first quarter of 2008. “The government’s long-term economic plan is working, with the economy growing at its fastest annual rate in six years. But the job is not yet done and so we will go on making the realistic assessment of what needs to be done to secure a brighter economic future.” Industrial production was slightly weaker than previously thought, with growth revised down to 0.3% from 0.4%. The construction sector fared better than expected, with output flat rather than down 0.5%.

Growth in the services sector remained unchanged at 1%. Economists said that the second estimate confirmed that while the recovery became more established between April and June, it would become less balanced in the coming months. Rob Wood, chief UK economist at Berenberg, said that the economy was likely to be more dependent on domestic demand as weakness in the eurozone - Britain’s largest trading partner - and tensions between Russia and the west affect exports. That would be a blow to George Osborne, who has repeatedly stated that an economy less reliant on consumer spending and more reliant on manufacturing and exports is the key to a sustainable future.

Wood said: “Widely spread expansion will get more lopsided over the next couple of quarters as events in Ukraine are weighing on the internationally exposed manufacturing sector, while UK domestic demand continues to expand rapidly. “We may have to brace for continued weak economic data from Germany and Europe over the next month.” Fears of a triple-dip recession in the eurozone were raised on Thursday after official figures showed the economy in the 18-member region ground to a halt in the second quarter. Worse still, markets were surprised by the news that Germany’s economy shrank by 0.2%. Earlier in the week, Mark Carney, the Bank of England governor, made it clear that weakness in the eurozone and geopolitical tensions were threats to the UK recovery.

# Thousands join Khan, Qadri anti-government march on Pakistan's capital

CNN, 15.08.2014



Thousands of anti-government supporters led by two of Pakistan's most influential figures have joined a march to Islamabad to demand the resignation of the country's prime minister, prompting a major security operation.

By early Friday, an estimated 15,000-20,000 people had joined cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan on the outskirts of Lahore in Pakistan's northwestern Punjab region. The procession took to the roads in cars, trucks and buses to make the 230-mile (370-kilometer) journey to the capital. The march started on Thursday as Pakistan celebrated Independence Day.

Khan, the former Pakistan cricket captain and leader of the Tehreek-e-insaaf (PTI) political party, has called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to stand down amid claims of vote rigging during last year's election, a claim Sharif has rejected. The huge convoy was joined by followers of outspoken cleric Tahir ul Qadri, who called on his supporters to join what he described as a "revolution march." Qadri, who led protests against Pakistan's government last year that brought the capital to a standstill, has accused the Sharif government of corruption and campaigned for more to be done for the country's poor. The march, which has been peaceful so far, prompted a huge security operation across the country, with tens of thousands of soldiers and police deployed along the route to Islamabad, while massive shipping containers and reels of barbed wire have been used to seal off many roads and highways.

However, many Qadri supporters joined the march armed with sticks and improvised shields. Last week, at least five of his supporters were killed during clashes with security forces in the country's northwestern Punjab province. Organizers from both camps expect thousands more to join the procession as they get closer to the capital. A Khan representative told CNN Thursday that they anticipated around 100,000 people would be taking part. They are expected to assemble in central Islamabad, where security has been especially tight, with routes to many government buildings and embassies blocked by containers and guarded by army personnel, who assumed responsibility for the city's security.

Late Thursday, the country's interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan told a press conference that the government had officially permitted the march to go ahead on the condition that protesters don't cross into the capital's "red zone" -- a tightly controlled area containing many government buildings. So far, crowds in the capital have been small, but they're expected to increase significantly as the march draws nearer later Friday. On Wednesday, in a rare address to the country, Prime Minister Sharif refuted accusations of electoral rigging and stressed that Pakistan has moved forward over the past 14 months in terms of "currency value, foreign investment and economic growth."



In an apparent attempt to appease Khan's demands for an investigation into electoral fraud last year, Sharif offered to form a commission consisting of three Supreme Court judges to investigate the claims. But at a press conference shortly after the prime minister's address, Khan said the government's response had arrived too late in the day and that he was now officially calling for the resignation of Sharif. The political instability comes at a time when Pakistan is waging a bloody war against militants -- particularly in the restive tribal regions along its border in Afghanistan. On Thursday two airbases in the southwestern city of Quetta in Balochistan Province were attacked by insurgent gunmen wearing suicide vests. But by early Friday, security forces repelled the attack, killing 10 terrorists and capturing another five, according to Imran Qureshi, the Superintendent of police in the city. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. But, senior police officers suspect Islamist militants could be behind the two coordinated attacks. Sarfaraz Bugti, the Home Minister Balochistan, told CNN the dead gunmen were Uzbeks.

## Announcements & Reports

### ► *The loss of humanity, the human rights dimension of the civil war in Syria*

**Source** : SETA

**Weblink** : [http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140722151506\\_the-loss-of-humanity-the-human-rights-dimension-of-the-civil-war-in-syria-pdf.pdf](http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140722151506_the-loss-of-humanity-the-human-rights-dimension-of-the-civil-war-in-syria-pdf.pdf)

### ► *The US – Iran rapprochement real or dream?*

**Source** : SETA

**Weblink** : [http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140806171416\\_08\\_analysis\\_ayegin.pdf](http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20140806171416_08_analysis_ayegin.pdf)

### ► *Overview of transmission tariffs in Europe: synthesis 2014*

**Source** : Entso-E

**Weblink** : [https://www.entsoe.eu/publications/market-reports/Documents/SYNTHESIS\\_2014\\_Final\\_140703.pdf](https://www.entsoe.eu/publications/market-reports/Documents/SYNTHESIS_2014_Final_140703.pdf)

### ► *Corporate performance: what do investors want to know? Reporting adjusted performance measures*

**Source** : PwC

**Weblink** : [http://www.pwc.com/en\\_GX/gx/audit-services/corporate-reporting/publications/investor-view/assets/pwc-investors-survey-apms-july-2014.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/audit-services/corporate-reporting/publications/investor-view/assets/pwc-investors-survey-apms-july-2014.pdf)

### ► *Equipped for the future: re-inventing your organisation*

**Source** : PwC

**Weblink** : <http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/financial-services/publications/assets/pwc-equipped-to-compete.pdf>

# Upcoming Events

## ▶ *RAND Public Policy Analysis Workshop*

**Date** : 05 – 06 August 2014  
**Place** : Washington - USA  
**Website** : <http://www.rand.org/events/2014/08/06.html>

## ▶ *Libya: what next?*

**Date** : 13 August 2014  
**Place** : London – United Kingdom  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/libya-what-next>

## ▶ *Finance and Economics Conference 2014*

**Date** : 13 – 15 August 2014  
**Place** : Munich, Bavaria, Germany  
**Website** : <http://www.lcbr-fec.org/>

## ▶ *International Conference on Business Strategy and Social Sciences*

**Date** : 16 – 17 August 2014  
**Place** : Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia  
**Website** : <http://www.pakrdw.com/?ic=details&id=3>

## ▶ *The Ukraine crisis and Russia's place in the international order*

**Date** : 20 August 2014  
**Place** : Washington - USA  
**Website** : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2014/08/20-ukraine-crisis-russia-international-order>

## ▶ *Macroeconomic Effects of China's RMB Internationalization and Capital Account Liberalization*

**Date** : 28 August 2014  
**Place** : Beijing - China  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/macroeconomic-effects-china%E2%80%99s-rmb-internationalization-and-capital-account-liberalization>

## ▶ *Japan's New Role in a Changing Asia*

**Date** : 31 August 2014  
**Place** : Nagoya - Japan  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/japan%C2%80%99s-new-role-changing-asia>



► *Launch of the Memos to the new EU leadership*

**Date** : 04 September 2014  
**Place** : Brussels - Belgium  
**Website** : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/view/450/>

► *President Erdogan: Turkey's election and the future*

**Date** : 04 September 2014  
**Place** : Washington - USA  
**Website** : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2014/09/04-turkey-election-erdogan>

► *Annual Meeting - Europe: the way ahead | Read more at Bruegel*

**Date** : 05 September 2014  
**Place** : Brussels - Belgium  
**Website** : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/451-annual-meeting-europe-the-way-ahead/>

► *Business Opportunity and Political Risk in the Gulf and Middle East*

**Date** : 07 - 08 September 2014  
**Place** : Manama - Bahrain  
**Website** : <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/geo-economics%20seminars/geo-economics%20seminars/archive/2014-fea4/business-opportunity-8b49>

► *Effects of income tax changes on economic growth*

**Date** : 09 September 2014  
**Place** : Washington - USA  
**Website** : <http://taxpolicycenter.org/events/effects-of-income-tax-changes.cfm>

► *Fifth Annual Conference in Political Economy, "The Crisis: Scholarship, Policies, Conflicts and Alternatives"*

**Date** : 16 - 18 September 2014  
**Place** : Naples – Italy  
**Website** : [http://iippe.org/wp/?page\\_id=1943](http://iippe.org/wp/?page_id=1943)

► *International Conference on Economics, Energy, Environment and Agricultural Sciences*

**Date** : 21 September 2014  
**Place** : Kuala Lumpur - Malaysia  
**Website** : <http://www.pakrdw.com/>

► *Europe's strategic choices: building prosperity and security*

**Date** : 17 – 19 October 2014  
**Place** : Berlin - Germany  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Berlin2014>



► *The New Shape of Banking: Regulation, Reform and Resilience*

**Date** : 20 October 2014  
**Place** : Berlin - Germany  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/Banking>

► *7<sup>th</sup> International Energy Congress Expo*

**Date** : 24 - 25 November 2014  
**Place** : Ankara - Turkey  
**Website** : <http://www.energy-congress.com>

► *Food security: mapping risks, building resilience*

**Date** : 01 – 02 December 2014  
**Place** : London – United Kingdom  
**Website** : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/foodsecurity2014>