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**Subject:** Fw: The Media Line MidEast Daily

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### Arab League Head Bashes Clinton Over Assad comments

Speaking during a visit to Damascus, the new head of the Arab League, Nabil El-Arabi, strongly criticized U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for disparaging Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. "No one has the right to say a president of any country has lost his legitimacy. The country's people are the ones who are entitled to say that," El-Arabi told reporters. He was reacting to Clinton's remarks that Al-Assad had "lost legitimacy" because he repressed his own people with Iran's help. Meanwhile, a star goalie of Syria's national soccer youth team has surfaced on YouTube saying the regime had placed a bounty of \$42,000 on his head. Abdulbaset al-Saroot has been in hiding since he publically called for deposing Al-Assad. Damascus has accused him of trying to establish "an emirate of radical Islam," a charge he denies. Al-Saroot is trying to avoid the fate of singer Ibrahim Kashush, who was killed mysteriously after leading protests in the streets of Hama.

### Estonians Bicycle Riders Freed in Lebanon

Appearing in good health, seven Estonian bicyclists were freed in Lebanon on Thursday, nearly four months after they were mysteriously kidnapped by armed men. It was not immediately clear who had been holding the seven or why they had been released. Lebanon's interior minister, Marwan Charbel, told reporters that he knew of no demands for ransom and that the main focus was on getting them safely to Beirut. The seven were abducted on March 23 after crossing into Lebanon from Syria. They had periodically been shown in videos posted on the Internet appealing to leaders for help. But they didn't present any demands on behalf of their captors. An unknown group called Haraket Al-Nahda Wal-Islah

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(the Movement for Renewal and Reform) took responsibility for the kidnapping. They were reportedly nabbed in a lawless area where many gangs of car thieves thrived.

## Rockets and Air Strikes between Gaza and Israel

July has seen an upsurge in rocket attacks on Israel from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip with one hitting Thursday and two the day before, sending residents scurrying for shelter. The rockets struck a house but caused no injuries. Israeli Air Force jets retaliated by bombing two tunnels they said were used by Hamas to smuggle in weapons from the Egyptian Sinai. Another tunnel used to infiltrate into Israel was also destroyed. After a relatively quiet period, 11 rockets fired from Gaza into Israel in the first half of July.

## Egypt dismisses nearly 700 cops

Egypt's security chief fired nearly 669 police officers on Wednesday, marking the latest concession by the country's interim military rulers to demands from protesters camping out in Cairo's Tahrir Square for the past week. Widespread police abuses were a key motivator for the uprising that toppled President Hosni Mubarak in February. But the ruling military council that took over from him has been slow to hold officials and police accountable for killing nearly 900 protesters during the uprising and other crimes. The move was seen as an attempt to cleanse the discredited and widely unpopular force. Egyptian television said 37 of the dismissed officers faced charges of killing protesters. The report said that among those dismissed were 505 major-generals, 82 brigadier generals and 82 colonels. Interior Minister Mansour Issawi said the dismissals would help "bring new blood" to the police force.

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