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Subject: Fw: The Media Line MidEast Daily

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Subject: The Media Line MidEast Daily



U.S. Protests Attack on Damascus Embassy

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Monday that Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad no longer has "legitimacy" as a leader interested in reform as Washington formally protested an attack on its embassy in Damascus. Protesters smashed windows at the embassy and raised a Syrian flag on the compound on Monday and they also tried to force their way into the French embassy building. Others attempted to break into the residence of U.S. ambassador Robert Ford. The protests, presumed to have been organized by the Al-Assad government, came after visits by the U.S. and French ambassadors last week to the opposition stronghold of Hama. Clinton's comments were the strongest public criticism yet by a senior U.S. official. A French Foreign Ministry official said the Syrian authorities had done nothing to stop the assault on its embassy.

Egyptian Gas Pipeline Attacked Again

The supply of Egyptian natural gas to Israel and Jordan was halted for a fourth time this year, after an attack on the pipeline Monday night. Masked gunman reportedly blew up part of the gas terminal at El Arish in the Sinai. The assailants reportedly threatened the guards and forced them to flee, after which witnesses said they heard a large explosion followed by a fire that could be seen 20 kilometers away. This attack is the second in a little over a week and came just after authorities had completed repairs from the previous strike. The repeated attacks have forced Israel to use other, more expensive fuels to power its generating plants while Jordan has been forced to ration electricity. Jordan depends on Egyptian gas to generate 80% of its electricity, while Israel gets 40% of its natural gas from its neighbor.

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Italy Calls for Accord to Libya Conflict Amid Allied Rifts

Italy called on Tuesday for a political solution to the war in Libya that would see Muammar Gaddafi "leaving the stage," another signs of the growing rifts between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies over how to aid rebels in their fight against strongman Muammar Al-Qaddafi. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini called for a political solution to the deadlocked fighting in Libya after his boss, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, said he never supported the war on Libya while France has complained about the slow pace of efforts to end the crisis. The U.S., meanwhile, warned that some allies engaged in the campaign against Al-Qaddafi could see their forces "exhausted" within three months. Calls for a diplomatic resolution have grown as rebel fighters have failed to oust Al-Qaddafi after months of fighting. Their advance towards Tripoli stalled on Monday as shelling by forces loyal to Al-Qaddafi killed eight and injured 25.

Israel Passes Law Banning Boycotts

Israel's Knesset (parliament) approved a law on Monday effectively barring citizens from engaging in boycotts against their own country or against Israelis and their communities in the West Bank. Under the controversial law, any person or an organization calling for the boycott of Israel or the settlements can be sued by the boycott's targets even if they cannot prove they sustained damage. The law also says a person or company that declares a boycott of Israel or the settlements will be barred from bidding on government contracts. Before the vote, the Knesset's legal adviser, Eyal Yanon, published an opinion saying parts of the law edge towards "illegality and perhaps beyond," but Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein earlier gave his approval. Rights groups said they would turn to the courts to have the legislation quashed.

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Syrian Opposition Split on Al-Assad's Fate

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