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Israel Wants UN to Rescind Goldstone Report

Israel will ask the United Nations Human Rights Council to rescind its report on the 2008-2009 Gaza war after the chairman of the panel that issued it, Judge Richard Goldstone, said he now believed Israel isn't guilty of war crimes. In an opinion piece published in The Washington Post, Goldstone said the report "would have been a different document" had he known then what he knows now. He blamed Israel for the panel's incorrect conclusions because Jerusalem had refused to cooperate with investigators. The panel accused both Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes by targeting civilians. But Goldstone said he had now concluded that Israel had caused civilian casualties due to errors of judgment, not intentionally. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu called on the UN to rescind the report immediately, saying Goldstone's new conclusions proved it belonged in the "dustbin of history." "Israel didn't intentionally harm civilians, its institutions and investigative bodies are worthy, while Hamas intentionally fired upon innocent civilians and didn't examine anything," Netanyahu said.

U.S. Withdraws From Libyan No-Fly Operation

The United States plans to withdraw from the operation to secure a no-fly zone over Libya as of Sunday amid concerns that the conflict between Muamar Al-Qaddafi and rebels is stalemating. The move, announced by senior U.S. military officials, comes amid debate inside the Obama administration over the ability of the rebels to win and the nature of the Libyan opposition, which many fear is dominated by Islamists. Washington had committed 90 aircraft to the operation. Its withdrawal will leave coalition forces with 143 aircraft. Meanwhile, fighting resumed in Libya as rebel forces battled

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for control of the eastern oil town of Brega. Rebels have captured the university on the outskirts of the city, Agence France Presse said. Shelling resumed on Misrata, Libya's third biggest city and the last big rebel stronghold in the west.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Makes Overtures to Iran

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi has welcomed a proposal by his Egyptian counterpart, Nabil Al-Arabi, to improve ties. "A good relationship between the two countries will definitely help stability, security and development in the region," Salehi told The Teheran Times. He said he hoped the new environment would lead to an upgrade of relations. Al-Arabi said last week that Egypt was read to "open a new page" with Iran and that the government no longer saw Iran as an enemy state. But the foreign minister wouldn't say whether Egypt would go as far as to open an embassy in Tehran. The two countries were bitter enemies during the rule of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, but since he was forced to step down there have been some signs of a thaw. Last month, Egypt allowed two Iranian warships to sail through the Suez Canal for the first time since the Shah's overthrow in 1979.

Protests in Afghanistan over Burning of Koran Kill UN Workers

Anger over the burning of a Koran in Florida spread across Afghanistan over the weekend as mobs killed at least 17 people, including seven United Nations staff in the usually quiet northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. The UN announced it will continue operations despite the tragedy. The protesters were whipped into a fury by Friday sermons over the burning of a Koran at the Dove World Outreach Center, a Christian evangelical church in Florida. U.S. President Barack Obama condemned the attacks as well as the burning of the Islamic holy book, which he called an act of "extreme intolerance and bigotry." The burning took place on March 20, but word of the act only began to spread in Afghanistan over the weekend.

Hamas Says German Mediation Over Shalit Is Over

Senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouq said German mediator Gerhard Conrad had failed to hammer out a deal to swap captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. "The German mediator's role is over," he was quoted as saying. Marzouq, the deputy Hamas politburo chief, told Al-Hayat newspaper that a breakthrough was no longer possible and accused Conrad of adopting the Israeli position on the prisoner exchange. Marzouq revealed that a deal was nearly reached with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, but he said Conrad failed to build on that when Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu took over two years ago. Israeli officials said Marzouq's comments were an attempt to pressure Netanyahu into a deal.

Bahrain Bans Opposition Newspaper

After first breaking the public resistance to its rule, Bahrain's government has shut down the country's main opposition newspaper Al-Wasat, which was critical of its actions during protests of the past few weeks. State television accused the

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newspaper of publishing "unethical and unprofessional" reports and said it would be investigated. It accused the paper of making up names of people allegedly abused by the police and targeting security forces. The Sunni-dominated government, aided by security personnel from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, put down demonstrations by Shiite minorities, who were demanding better treatment and the dissolution of parliament.

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