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

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**Sent:** Thu Mar 17 06:06:38 2011

**Subject:** The Media Line MidEast Daily



## Israel, Iran Trade Accusations Over Weapons Ship

Israeli accusations that 50-tons of weapons seized aboard a German ship that sailed from Syria was intended for use against its citizens was dismissed as lies by Iran. At a dockside display of the arms in the port of Ashdod on Wednesday conducted personally by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, he told local and foreign journalists that the weapons-trove disproved critics of Israel's policy of blockading the Gaza Strip in order to prevent arms from being smuggled to terrorist forces there, including Hamas. An Israeli army officer added that the C-704 anti-ship missiles that were part of the ship's cargo are known to be in the hands of Hizbullah in Lebanon but were not believed to have reached Gaza yet. The C-704 is a radar-guided weapon that was used by Hizbullah in the 2006 war to disable an Israeli naval vessel, killing four crew members. Meanwhile in Tehran, Major-General Ataollah Salehi, commander of the Iranian army, was telling the state-run news agency that "the Israeli regime is made of lies and fabrications," and predicted that it will "drown in the waters of the Mediterranean."

## Palestinian Authority Head 'Abbas Willing to Visit Gaza for Reconciliation

Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud 'Abbas is accepting an invitation from his Hamas counterpart to visit the Gaza Strip to break the impasse over reconciliation between the Fatah and Hamas factions. Ismail Haniyyeh, who led Hamas' forced takeover of Gaza in 2007, issued the invitation on Tuesday after rallies were held in both Gaza and the West Bank by thousands of young Palestinians demanding the bifurcated governments act to restore

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unity. 'Abbas also reiterated that he is not planning to seek reelection if and when elections are held.

## Anti-government Protestors Forcibly Routed in Bahrain

Black smoke was seen above the capital city of Manama on Wednesday after thousands of government troops backed by armor and air support routed anti-government demonstrators from their central position in Pearl Square. The minority Sunni government began its final push to end the growing protests after a force of 1,000 soldiers from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States arrived to lend support to the Al-Khalifa regime. There were reports of live ammunition being fired at protestors in addition to rubber bullets and tear gas. Three demonstrators and three policemen died in the melee. In Libya, four journalists working for the *New York Times* have gone missing while on assignment to cover the withdrawal of rebel forces from Ajdabiya. Some believe the four were captured by forces loyal to Mu'amar Al-Qaddafi, but the government has promised the newspaper that if it was true, they would be released immediately and unharmed. Saif Al-Islam, one of Al-Qaddafi's sons, told a television audience on Wednesday night that "everything will be over in forty-eight hours." Reports coming out of Libya indicate a population bitter that Western assistance – such as imposition of a no-fly zone – was talked-about but never implemented in time.

## Activists in Egypt to March Against "Cosmetic Constitutional Changes"

Thousands of young Egyptian activists are expected to turn out on Friday to march against a referendum slated for Saturday to approve the first wave of changes to the constitution in advance of elections. What was supposed to be the first proof that Egypt is moving toward democracy after toppling Husni Mubarak following a 32-year reign is now being trashed by opposition leaders as mere "cosmetic" changes. Mohammed ElBaradei, the former head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency and a leader of the opposition, denounced the resulting document as being a "dictator's constitution." The constitutional changes were decided upon by a small committee selected by the military council ruling the country since Mubarak's overthrow with almost no public input. One fear is that the proposed changes open the door to the Muslim Brotherhood being in position to re-write the new constitution.

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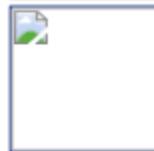
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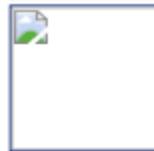
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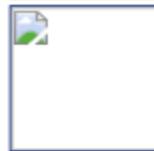
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The Media Line (TML) is an American non-profit news organization established to enhance and balance media coverage in the Middle East, promote independent reporting in the region, and break down barriers to understanding in the Arab and Israeli journalism communities.

TML's mission is to provide credible, unbiased content, background and context to local media outlets throughout the Middle East and around the world. The Media Line has a mandate for education and supports scholarly endeavors at all levels. TML is "The Mideast News Source."

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