

From: Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>

To: "Jeevacation@gmail.com" <Jeevacation@gmail.com>

Subject: Fw: The Media Line MidEast Daily

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From: medialine@list.themedialine.org <medialine@list.themedialine.org>

To: MEDaily@list.themedialine.org <MEDaily@list.themedialine.org>

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Subject: The Media Line MidEast Daily



Bomb Explodes in Tyre Hotel, No Casualties

A bomb exploded in a restaurant inside the Queen Elissa Hotel in the Lebanese port city of Tyre early Wednesday morning. Extensive damage to the ground floor of the hotel was reported, but there were no casualties. Windows on all three floors were blown out. Although the hotel is commonly frequented by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, officials so far have no idea of a motive behind the blast or whether a second bomb that went off at a nearby liquor store five minutes later was related to the hotel incident. UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) peacekeepers have been the targets of attacks in southern Lebanon, the most recent in July when a roadside bomb exploded near French soldiers who were part of the UN force. Five were injured in that attack.

Fatah-Hamas Set Election Date; Fayyad Likey to Step Down

Fatah and Hamas have agreed on a May date for elections according to a Hamas spokesman. The agreement is the first sign of progress since the signing of a unity pact last May. A government comprised of non-political technocrats is expected to be named to serve until a permanent slate is selected in the election. Key to the deal is the apparent willingness by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to step aside. Hamas has been adamant that Fayyad must go, charging that he is a pawn of the Western governments and too close to Israel. But his presence in the government is the comfort level Western

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governments have demanded in order to funnel aid to the Palestinian Authority. Many are openly asking whether the removal of Fayyad would be shortsighted: solving the Fatah-Hamas logjam but costing hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid. The plan will be approved at a meeting in Cairo on November 25.

Army Defectors Replace Citizen Protestors in Fight Against Syria's Army

The level of violence marking unrest in Syria has escalated as army defectors with military training are replacing citizen protestors in the fight against President Bashar Al-Asad's minions. The former soldiers using automatic weapons and shoulder-fired missiles are inflicting casualties on Al-Asad's forces and propelling the overall death toll upward. Estimates are that at least 4,000 have died since the fighting began nine months ago. Early Wednesday morning, fighters from the Free Syrian Army as the defectors call themselves, attacked an air force intelligence facility located on the outskirts of Damascus. It was the first attack against a major government security installation. Meanwhile, Syria has announced that it will boycott a session of the Arab League set to convene on Wednesday in Rabat. There had been speculation that Syria would use the occasion to try to convince the League to rescind its suspension.

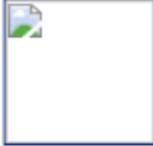
EU Human Rights Council Takes Turkey to Task

Turkey's record on press freedoms needs to drastically improve before it can expect to be admitted to the European Union according to the Council of Europe human rights body. Speaking to foreign journalists in Ankara on Tuesday, the Council's secretary-general admonished that courts and prosecutors in Turkey lack a clear understanding of what journalists can or cannot say without fearing arrest and imprisonment. Under Prime Minister Erdogan, Turkey has been lobbying for admission to the EU. But his government's suppression of journalists continues to be an obstacle to acceptance. Reporters without Borders ranks Turkey 138th out of 178 countries listed in its World Press Freedoms Index. At least 70 reporters are currently in jail under counter-terrorism statutes which allow detention without bringing charges.

Israel Floats Tenders for 800 Post-1967 Homes; Palestinians Say Proof Quartet Efforts are Dead

The Israeli government is allowing tenders for construction of 800 new homes in areas acquired in the 1967 war, a move that the Palestinian chief negotiator says proves the Quartet peacemaking efforts have failed. The new housing starts are for the areas known as Har Homa and Pisgat Zeev, both Jerusalem suburbs which Israel claims do not have the same status as non-Jerusalem communities. The move is part of

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Israeli retaliation against the Palestinians for their failed attempt to end-run the negotiating process by seeking UN membership and for seeking and receiving full member status in UNESCO, the UN cultural organization. The announcement is just the beginning of the process and no actual construction will ensue for several months. All of the 2,000 new housing units planned overall will be located in areas that are believed to be destined to remain under Israeli sovereignty – a distinction that fails to impress the Palestinians. Israel has also frozen monthly transfer of tax revenue it collects for the Palestinians, in this case some \$100 million the Palestinian Authority desperately needs in order to pay its civil workers' salaries.

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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.

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