

DAMASCUS (FNA) – Exiled opposition factions from Syria, increasingly resigned to the reality of the situation on the ground and likewise worried about the rise of ISIL, are discussing a proposal for their next big meeting to leave President Bashar Assad in power, reports said. Publicly, the opposition has long insisted that there is no discussion to be had with the Assad government without the understanding that Assad steps down immediately. The new proposal would call for elections in two years, Anti-War reported Saturday.

He who condones a shameful act, then it is as if he were a participant.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

**Report:**

# CIA Bankrolled al-Qaeda in 2010

WASHINGTON (Press TV) – **The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has at times financed al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan, according to a new report.**

The \$1 million of CIA funds inadvertently ended up in the hands of the al-Qaeda in 2010, the New York Times reported on Saturday.

The CIA had actually allocated the money to a secret Afghan government fund.

But later Kabul was forced to

pay al-Qaeda \$5 million in ransom to secure the release of one of its diplomats abducted by the terrorist group in neighboring Pakistan.

One fifth of the money was the funds given to the Afghan government by the CIA.

The report said Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, had at first been concerned about the cash, fearing that the CIA might have tainted it with poison, radiation or a tracking device.

He reportedly suggested that the money should be converted to another currency.

The newspaper said al-Qaeda used the cash to buy weapons and provide payments to families of al-Qaeda terrorists held in Afghanistan.

“God blessed us with a good amount of money this month,” Atiyah Abd al-Rahman, the al-Qaeda general manager, wrote to bin Laden in June 2010.

The newspaper said the funds

the CIA delivered to the Afghan government of President Hamid Karzai was used to buy the loyalty of warlords, legislators and other important Afghan officials.

It was also used to cover expenses of clandestine diplomatic trips as well as housing for senior government officials.

Afghan officials told the New York Times the cash flow has slowed since Ashraf Ghani became president of the country in September last year.

## Iraqi Kurdistan Says Can Prove ISIL Used CWs

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – **The government of Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdistan region says it is in possession of evidence that shows the Takfiri ISIL terrorist group used chlorine gas against Peshmerga forces.**

The Security Council of Kurdistan Regional Government said in a Saturday statement that samples of clothing and soil from the site of a January 23 attack by the ISIL were examined by an independent laboratory in an unnamed country that is a member of the US-led coalition purportedly fighting ISIL.

The examination discovered chlorine traces in the samples, it said.

The statement further noted that the purported truck bomb attack occurred on a road between Iraq’s terrorist-held city of Mosul and the Syrian border, as Peshmerga forces

fought to capture a key supply line used by the extremist terrorists.

The council said Kurdish forces later found “around 20 gas canisters” that the truck involved in the assault had been carrying.

“The fact [that] ISIL relies on such tactics demonstrates it has lost the initiative and is resorting to desperate measures,” the Kurdish government said.

Chlorine, an industrial chemical, could suffocate its victims to death when used as a weapon.

In October 2014, Iraqi officials said ISIL terrorists might have used chlorine-filled cylinders during fighting in late September that year in the towns of Balad and Duluiya.

The ISIL terrorists currently control parts of Iraq and the neighboring Syria, where they have committed heinous crimes.

## US Suspends Diplomatic Operations in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Press TV) – US diplomatic officials based in Saudi Arabia say they are suspending operations at the embassy and consulates in the kingdom due to “heightened security concerns.”

The US embassy officials in Riyadh said in a statement issued early on Sunday that telephone lines at the diplomatic facilities will be disconnected on Sunday and Monday and called on Americans in the kingdom to “be aware of their surroundings and

take extra precautions when travelling throughout the country.”

The statement neither identified a precise security threat nor did it call for the complete evacuation of the diplomatic facilities.

The US consulate generals in Saudi Arabia are located in the Red Sea city of Jeddah and in Dhahran in Eastern Province.

The State Department has also called on American citizens to “carefully consider the risks of

traveling to Saudi Arabia and limit non-essential travel within the country.”

“Regardless of where you are, it is always advisable to keep your security and situational awareness levels high,” it added.

On Friday night, the US embassy in Saudi Arabia said in a warning posted online that Western oil workers in the country are at risk of being attacked or kidnapped by “terrorist” groups.

The embassy said it “has in-

formation stating that, as of early March, individuals associated with a terrorist organization could be targeting Western oil workers, possibly to include those US citizens working for oil companies in the Eastern Province, for an attack(s) and/or kidnapping(s).”

Several people from the US and Europe were killed in a spate of deadly attacks conducted by al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia between 2003 and 2006.

## 12 Killed, Dozens Wounded in Bomb Attacks Across Pakistan



Pakistani policemen arrive at the site of a bomb explosion in Lahore.

ISLAMABAD (AFP) – **Three bomb attacks have taken place across Pakistan, leaving at least 12 people dead and dozens of others injured.**

In the first attack, which was carried out in a crowded marketplace in the Orangi Town neighborhood of Karachi on Saturday night, at least two people lost their lives and 12 others sustained injuries.

“The bomb was planted in a cement block. Those killed and wounded were civilians, the injured included two children,” Ali Asif, a senior police official said.

He added that two motorcycles were destroyed in the bomb attack which also damaged “several nearby shops.”

According to a bomb disposal expert in the city, over a kilogram of explosives was used in the bomb.

Criminal, ethnic, political and

sectarian killings are rampant in Karachi, which is home to 18 million people. Hundreds of people lose their lives each year in the city’s violence.

Meanwhile, separately in Lahore, twin blasts near two churches in a Christian neighborhood of the city killed at least 10 people and injured nearly 50 others on Sunday.

According to police spokeswoman Nabeela Ghazanfar, the deadly explosions hit Youhanabad area, where over 100,000 Christians live.

She added that a state of emergency has been declared in all the city’s hospitals.

Pro-Taliban militants have claimed responsibility for the Lahore bombings.

Following the attacks, hundreds of Christians took to the streets to slam the police. In a statement carried by state media, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif “condemned the Lahore blasts and directed provincial governments to ensure the security of public and their properties.”

Thousands of Pakistanis and Afghans have lost their lives in bombings and other militant attacks since 2001, when the United States started its so-called war against terrorism in the respective nations.

## Zionist Troops Target Palestinian Boats Off Gaza Coast



A Palestinian policeman inspects a burned boat on a beach in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – **The Zionist regime’s naval forces have once again opened fire on Palestinian fishermen off the northwest coast of the Gaza Strip in their latest act of aggression against the residents of the besieged sliver.**

According to eyewitnesses, the fishermen were targeted four miles away from the coast of the al-Sudaniya area in Gaza City on Saturday morning.

The attack caused damage to one of the vessels, but no one

was injured.

The Zionist regime had imposed a limit of three nautical miles on fishing in waters off the Gaza shore until last August. Zionist troops have frequently targeted Palestinian boats, well inside the radius.

In the latest incident, a 32-year-old Palestinian fisherman was shot dead and two others were arrested last week.

Under a ceasefire agreement reached between the Zionist regime and Palestinians in August 2014, Tel Aviv agreed

to immediately expand the fishing zone off Gaza’s coast, allowing fishermen to sail as far as six nautical miles off

the shore. The agreement also stipulated that The occupying regime would expand the area gradually up to 12 miles.

Palestinian fishermen, however, say that the Zionist navy opens fire before they reach the agreed limit.

The ceasefire deal put an end to the regime’s 50-day military offensive against Gaza, which claimed more than 2,100 lives and injured some 11,000 last summer.

The Zionist military assaults have significantly damaged Gaza’s fishing industry.

Around 4,000 fishermen work in Gaza, with more than half of them living below the poverty line.

The Gaza Strip has been under the regime’s blockade since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standard of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment, and unrelenting poverty.

## 54 Taliban Killed in Fresh Raids in Afghanistan

KABUL (FNA) – **Some 54 Taliban militants have been killed as the Afghan army pressed ahead with offensives in restive provinces, the Defense Ministry said on Sunday.**

“Afghan National Army carried out cleanup operations in Ghazni, Kandahar, Laghman, Faryab and Sari Pul provinces within the past 24 hours, killing 49 armed militants, wounding several and detaining 18 others,” the ministry said in a statement, Xinhua reported.

Meanwhile, five militants were killed and six others wounded as a result of an ongoing offensive in the Southern Helmand province, according to the statement.

Two soldiers were also killed during the operations, the statement noted, adding that weapons were seized, and 109 roadside bombs and landmines were defused.

The Taliban militant group has yet to make comments.