Kayhan International

Arab Leaders Targeted in Probe as Likud Disputes Results

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- Israel's Shin Bet chief David Zini has requested that four Arab Knesset members—including Ta'al leader Ahmad Tibi, Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas, and Balad leader Sami Abu Shehadeh—be questioned under caution over suspected foreign election interference.

The move comes as Netanyahu's Likud challenges Arab voter turnout. The attorney general's office denied obstructing the probe and announced a joint Shin Bet-police investigative team.

Thought for Today

No knowledge is superior to deep thinking and prudence; no worship or prayers are more sacred than fulfillment of obligations and duties.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

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Trump's Pledge to Cut $4bn Israel Aid Rattles Israeli Security Establishment



Protesters burn Israeli and U.S. flags during a protest in Tehran.

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- **Israeli authorities have reportedly expressed alarm and confusion after U.S. President Donald Trump said Washington would end its military aid to Israel by the end of this year.**

Opposition politicians warned that it could undermine the occupying entity's so-called security and damage its strategic relationship with the United States.

Israel's public broadcaster reported on Wednesday that officials at the war ministry were caught off guard by Trump's remarks, as they had not been informed of the decision in advance.

Quoting a senior security official, it said, "We did not expect to hear about the end of U.S. aid today, at least," adding that the security establishment would need to assess the consequences.

Channel 12 also reported an atmosphere of anxiety within Israel's security establishment, as officials sought to determine the reasons behind Trump's announcement, its implementation timeline and whether it would involve only financial assistance or a broader change in bilateral security cooperation.

Opposition figures sharply criticized the move, blaming the regime's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, for allowing the relationship with Washington to deteriorate.

Gadi Eisenkot, a centrist opposition politician seeking to replace Netanyahu, said the fact that Israeli settlers and security officials had learned about a change to the strategic relationship through the media demonstrated the risks posed by the prime minister's conduct.

Yair Golan, leader of the Democrats opposition party, warned that Netanyahu was deepening the regime's so-called security and economic crisis. Opposition leader Yair Lapid also described the decision as one of the most serious political and security setbacks in Israel's history.

Trump announced the decision during a phone interview with Fox News on Tuesday, as Americans headed to the polls for the midterm elections. He said Washington would stop providing nearly $4 billion in annual military assistance because Israel no longer needed it.

"We were giving them $4bn ... But it gets cut off at the end of the year," Trump said, adding that the decision had been discussed with Netanyahu for several years. He also suggested that arms sales could replace the existing aid arrangement.

The announcement, delivered on the eve of voting and framed around Israel's supposed self-sufficiency, carries the hallmarks of an election-season gesture rather than a genuine rupture in Washington's pro-Israeli posture — yet the mere suggestion has been enough to unsettle the very establishment that has long taken American largesse for granted.

The current U.S.-Israel memorandum of understanding provides $3.8 billion in annual military assistance and is due to expire in 2028.

The announcement comes amid growing public criticism of U.S. support for Israel since the occupying entity launched its genocidal war on Gaza in October 2023.

A Quinnipiac University poll released in September found that 48 percent of American voters believed Washington was providing too much support to Israel, up from 16 percent in 2017. Among Democrats, the figure had risen from 20 to 66 percent.

Israel Kills Four Gazans, Kidnaps 42 in West Bank, Continues Lebanon, Syria Violations

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) -- **Israeli strikes killed four Palestinians, including a teenage girl, according to Gaza health and security officials.**

Nasser Hospital reported three dead on arrival after a strike hit a tent sheltering displaced people west of Khan Yunis, while a separate strike in Al-Mawasi killed Muhammed Shalouf of Hamas's internal security service, bringing the total to four.

In Gaza City, a drone strike on a tent in a park killed 17-year-old Rimas al-Madhoun, according to civil defense spokesman Mahmoud Bassal.

The Gaza Health Ministry says ceasefire violations have killed 1,599 Palestinians and wounded 5,774 since a sham truce took effect in October 2025.

Israeli forces kidnapped 42 Palestinians across the West Bank on Wednesday, including two women, a journalist and several former prisoners, according to the Palestinian WAFA news agency.

In Nablus governorate, 18 Palestinians were abducted raids on several neighborhoods and surrounding towns and villages. Military vehicles entered the Old City and the Al-Ma'ajeen neighborhood, where four brothers were abducted.

Raids also targeted Beita, Kafr Qallil, Yatma, Zeita Jama'in and Zawata. A separate report said simultaneous operations were conducted across multiple cities, towns and refugee camps, with home searches and field interrogations of children and youths.

In Lebanon, Israeli forces set fire to homes in the town of Haddatha in the Bint Jbeil district starting Wednesday morning, according to the Lebanese National News Agency.

Artillery shelling targeted Baraachit in Bint Jbeil, as well as Mansouri and Wadi Zibqin in the Tyre district. An Israeli drone dropped stun grenades near farmers picking olives around Halta farm on the outskirts of Kfar Shuba.

Israeli drones were also reported flying at low altitude over Beirut and its southern suburbs. Despite a disgraceful framework agreement signed by the state in June 2026 providing for gradual Israeli withdrawal, terrorist operations have continued, with Lebanese authorities reporting nearly 4,400 killed and more than 12,400 wounded since March 2.

In Syria, an Israeli force of five vehicles advanced Wednesday morning from the Al-Jazeera barracks along the Ma'ariya–Abidin–Jamla road toward Saysoun and Al-Masritiya in the western Dara'a countryside, continuing toward Quneitra via the Saida al-Hanout road and reaching the Abu al-Ghaythar gate, according to SABA.

Three Israeli tanks moved toward the Al-Ma'kar area west of Saida al-Hanout, conducting military maneuvers, while a separate force of four military vehicles entered Jubata al-Khashab and searched several homes.

Qatar News Agency reported additional incursions toward the Mantara dam in central Quneitra and toward Tal Abu Qabis near the village of Kodna.

China, Oman Sign Currency Swap Deal to Reduce Dollar Dependence

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- **China and Oman have signed a $4.47 billion currency swap agreement and agreed to expand cooperation on digital currencies and cross-border payments, marking another step in Beijing's efforts to promote alternatives to dollar-based financial transactions.**

The agreement was signed during Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to Beijing. The People's Bank of China (PBOC) said the five-year arrangement, worth 30 billion yuan ($4.47 billion), equivalent to 1.5 billion Omani rials, would strengthen monetary cooperation and facilitate cross-border payments.

The two central banks also signed a memorandum of understanding on digital payments and central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), opening additional avenues for financial transactions using national currencies.

The development carries significance beyond bilateral banking cooperation. It reflects a broader effort by China and its trading partners to diversify payment mechanisms and reduce their exposure to the U.S. dollar-dominated financial system, particularly as Washington increasingly uses economic sanctions and financial restrictions as instruments of foreign policy.

Oman's economic relationship with China provides a substantial foundation for the initiative. Bilateral trade reached approximately 9.6 billion Omani rials ($24.9 billion) in 2025, with China accounting for around 23.8% of Oman's total trade and serving as its largest trading partner. Omani exports to China, including crude oil and other energy products, amounted to 7.7 billion rials.

The currency agreement also comes amid growing international debate over the dollar's dominance and the potential consequences of Washington's use of financial leverage. For Beijing, expanding yuan-denominated transactions offers a way to protect trade and investment channels from external financial pressure.

An analysis published by the Asian Development Bank Institute in July 2026 identified rising geopolitical tensions, particularly between China and the United States, as an important factor influencing currency choices in international trade. It noted that emerging economies were increasingly exploring transactions in local currencies, although the dollar remained dominant.

During his talks with Sultan Haitham, Chinese President Xi Jinping also delivered a pointed message concerning Washington's regional policies and the broader geopolitical environment.

"The Middle East Persian Gulf region should not become an arena for great-power rivalry and geopolitical conflict. Peace and stability in the region require joint nurturing and protection by all parties," Xi said, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

The Chinese president reaffirmed Beijing's readiness to work with Oman and other regional countries to promote peace and stability, while opposing the escalation of geopolitical tensions.

The two countries also witnessed the signing of 16 cooperation documents covering green development, industrial supply chains, artificial intelligence, satellite navigation, science and technology, investment and financial regulation.

China's diplomatic engagement is expected to continue, with its special envoy for West Asia, Zhai Jun, scheduled to visit Iran, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Algeria Deploys Troops to Niger to Counter Israeli-UAE-Moroccan Subversion

ALGIERS (Dispatches) -- An Algerian military convoy arrived in Niger last Friday, marking the country's first deployment of forces abroad since 1973, when it supported Egypt in its war against the Israeli occupation of the Sinai peninsula.

The deployment represents a significant but measured step by Algiers to secure its strategic interests against a destabilization campaign driven by the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Israel—a hostile axis whose malice toward Algeria's security and energy sovereignty has become impossible to ignore.

The move follows Algeria's decision to send four fighter jets to Niger on August 30 to thwart an attempted coup against President Abdourahamane Tiani.

Although the North African state opposed the 2023 coup that brought Tiani to power, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has extended a much-needed lifeline to the beleaguered leader, who himself requested the deployment.

Speaking on Sunday, Algerian Senator Belkacem Boulghiti said the troops would protect economic infrastructure and oil facilities belonging to Algerian companies, stressing that Algeria is "not sending our soldiers to wage war in Niger."

Retired senior Algerian diplomat Amar Belani identified the source of the threat in an article published in October, describing growing instability in the Sahel as part of a "destabilization strategy actively involving the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Israel and certain French proxies."

Belani noted that continued instability in Niger would "directly threaten Algerian interests" and hinder the Nigeria-Niger-Algeria trans-Saharan gas pipeline project.

Zine Ghebouli, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told Middle East Eye that the region's turmoil "is imposing new security imperatives on Algiers."

Algeria severed diplomatic relations with the UAE in September after "exhausting all means to preserve bilateral relations," accusing Abu Dhabi of hostile actions and viewing the Emirati role as destructive.

The UAE has backed Khalifa Haftar's military expansion toward the Libya-Niger corridors, while Rabat courts the Haftar family and promotes a rival Atlantic pipeline—both with Emirati financing and Israeli backing through the Abraham Accords.

Dr Fatiha Dazi-Heni, a senior political scientist at Irsem in Paris, said the troops are meant to protect energy installations, notably Sonatrach's oil projects and the Trans-Saharan Gas Pipeline corridor.

"By securing Niger, Algeria is protecting its own answer to the Morocco-UAE axis," she told MEE, noting that Rabat, Abu Dhabi, and Israel indirectly have a clear interest in the Atlantic route prevailing.

The deployment reflects Algeria's traditionally cautious strategic culture adapting to new constraints—a sovereign response to malice that leaves Algiers no choice but to defend its redlines.

Iraqi PM Visits Bahrain Amid Detentions of Shia Clerics

MANAMA (Dispatches) -- **Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi arrived in Manama on Wednesday for an official visit with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, a trip his office described as part of a regional tour aimed at "supporting political solutions to regional disputes."**

Bahrain's official news agency reported that the two leaders discussed bilateral cooperation and regional developments, without further detail.

Al-Zaidi's office said the visit reflects Iraq's "balanced and open" foreign policy. The trip follows a series of diplomatic engagements by al-Zaidi since taking office, including visits to Washington, Tehran, Riyadh, Amman and Damascus.

The visit comes as Bahraini authorities have intensified pressure on Shia religious institutions.

Just a day before al-Zaidi's arrival, Bahrain extended the detention of several Shia clerics and husseiniya officials over their activities during Fatima mourning rituals, accusing them of "insulting religious symbols" and "inciting division."

Among those held are Ustad Habib Abbas Khamis, head of the Haj Ahmed bin Khamis Husseiniya, and Mulla Habib Darazi, a religious speaker arrested over an audio recording of the Ziyarat Ashura recitation.

Authorities extended their detention by 15 days pending investigation. Human rights observers describe the measures as part of a broader campaign to weaken the clerical class's autonomy and restrict public mourning spaces.

The choice of Bahrain as a destination carries its own significance. The kingdom hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet at Naval Support Activity Bahrain, which has long served as the logistical hub for American maritime aggression in the region.

The visit also comes amid scrutiny of al-Zaidi's own policies in recent weeks. His government has kept the Shayb border crossing with Iran closed since October 21, with officials citing technical reasons.

The closure has disrupted a key overland trade route and hit the economy of Iraq's Maysan province, where local traders depend on cross-border commerce.

Iraqi authorities had previously closed three border crossings with Iran temporarily in September following an alleged attack launched from Iraqi territory toward Saudi Arabia.

Al-Zaidi's premiership itself began under circumstances that continue to shape his room for maneuver. He was sworn in in May 2026 after months of deadlock, following a U.S. veto of former premier Nouri al-Maliki's return.

A businessman with no prior political experience, he was backed by the Coordination Framework, the largest Shia parliamentary bloc. His government was approved with only a partial cabinet, as lawmakers failed to reach consensus on key posts including interior and defense.