



Displaced Iraqis from the Yazidi community cross the Iraqi-Syrian border along the Fishkhabur bridge over the Tigris River at the Fishkhabur crossing, in northern Iraq, yesterday. Inset: Others from the community shelter from the sun as they wait to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border. At least 20,000 civilians who had been besieged by jihadists on a mountain in northern Iraq have safely escaped to Syria and been escorted by Kurdish forces back into Iraq, officials said.

# Iraq president names new PM

## Maliki hangs tough

REUTERS, Baghdad

Iraq's president named a new prime minister to replace Nuri al-Maliki yesterday, urging him to form a broad government that can stem communal bloodshed, but it was unclear whether Maliki would bow to US and Iranian pressure to step aside.

A Shi'ite Muslim blamed by erstwhile allies in Washington and Tehran as well as Baghdad for driving the alienated Sunni minority into revolt, Maliki deployed loyal militias and special forces in the capital yesterday after making a defiant speech accusing the head of state of abusing the constitution.

Militants from the Islamic State, who routed Maliki's army in the north in June, made new gains over Kurdish forces despite three days of US air strikes and Baghdad, long braced for the Sunni fighters to attack the city, was now tensing for possible clashes between Maliki and rivals within the Shi'ite majority.

There was no immediate reaction from Maliki to the naming of Haider al-Abadi as prime minister. However, Maliki's son-in-law, a close political ally, told Reuters that he would seek to overturn the nomination in the courts.

President Fouad Masoum asked Abadi, a leader of Maliki's Islamic Dawa Party, to lead an administration that can win the support of a parliament elected in April. In remarks broadcast on television, Masoum, an ethnic Kurd, urged him to "form a

broader-based government" over the next month.

Abadi himself, who spent decades in exile in Britain during the rule of Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein, urged national unity against the "barbaric" Islamic State, which has driven tens of thousands from their homes as it swept Baghdad's troops from the north and west to consolidate a "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria.

After Washington endorsed Masoum's attempts to break three months of post-election political deadlock that have hamstrung Baghdad's response to the Islamic State, Secretary of State John Kerry called on Maliki not to resort to force or "stir the waters" when Iraqis were seeking a change of leader.

As police and elite armed units, many equipped and trained by the United States, locked down the capital's streets, Kerry added: "There should be no use of force, no introduction of troops or militias in this moment of democracy for Iraq."

Before Abadi's nomination, a US State Department spokeswoman reaffirmed support for a "prime minister who can represent the aspirations of the Iraqi people by building a national consensus and governing in an inclusive manner".

"We reject any effort to achieve outcomes through coercion or manipulation of the constitutional or judicial process," she said in a statement, adding that the United States "fully supports" Masoum as guarantor of Iraq's constitution.



# Saudi king, Egypt's Sisi discuss regional crises

AFP, Jeddah

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia discussed developments in Syria, Iraq, Gaza and Libya with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, during Sisi's first visit to his regime's powerful ally since winning May elections.

Sisi flew to the Red Sea city of Jeddah late on Sunday and held talks with King Abdullah before carrying out the lesser umra pilgrimage in the holy Muslim city of Mecca, the official SPA news agency reported.

"This meeting between the two countries' leaderships is important in light of the circumstances facing Arab and Muslim nations," SPA news agency quoted Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal as saying on the sidelines of the late Sunday mini-summit.

Faisal hoped their meeting "could help resolve the Arab world's problems" such as the difficulties facing "Palestinians and Syrians as well as the sedition in Iraq and differences in Libya."

SPA reported that King Abdullah discussed "ongoing efforts to end the Israeli aggression on Gaza" Strip with Sisi, whose country is hosting talks aimed at a durable end to a month-long conflict between Palestinian militants and Israel that has wreaked devastating bloodshed.

They also discussed "means of strengthening cooperation between" Cairo and Riyadh, that has given billions of dollars in aid to Egypt to help kick-start its battered economy after the military, then headed by Sisi, overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July last year.

# Amnesty slates US over civilian deaths in Afghanistan

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Dozens of potential war crimes committed by American forces in Afghanistan have gone uninvestigated by Washington because of a "deeply flawed" military justice system, Amnesty International alleged yesterday.

The human rights group said thousands of Afghans have been killed or injured by US forces, who are due to pull out of the country at the end of this year, but have little chance of forcing the Pentagon to hold those responsible to account where deaths were unlawful.

In an 84-page report published yesterday, Amnesty calls on the US to end what it says is a culture of secrecy surrounding military discipline and consider replacing its "commander-driven" investigations, which rely on soldiers' own accounts of their actions, with civilian-managed courts martial.

The organisation studied 10 American military operations which resulted in the deaths of 140 civilians between 2009 and 2013 but said none had resulted in prosecutions, despite apparent evidence of atrocities. It said that since 2009, there had been just six trials of US personnel for the alleged illegal killing of Afghan civilians.

Amnesty said it had interviewed 125 witnesses and family members in connection with the Afghan cases, many of which involved operations by US special forces.

In two cases there was "abundant and compelling" evidence of war crimes, including the attempted cover-up of the shooting of pregnant women and torture of captives, according to the group.



Palestinian boys carry Hamas flags as they lead a funeral procession yesterday in Jabalia of a man who was killed after being targeted by an Israeli airstrike late Sunday -- hours before a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was scheduled to begin. A fresh 72-hour ceasefire between Israel and Hamas came into effect in Gaza yesterday, paving the way for talks in Egypt aimed at a durable end to a month-long conflict that has wreaked devastating bloodshed.

# Gaza fishermen suffer for sewage

AFP, Gaza City

After spending two hours waist-deep in the sea, Sameer al-Hissi says his paltry haul of tiny fish is not the only consequence he and Gaza's fishermen are suffering from Israel's offensive.

Ashore, he lifts up his t-shirt to show red-brown blotches across his chest and stomach, the result, he says, of spending his mornings in a sea heavily tainted with smelly sewage since Israeli strikes knocked out the power station supplying electricity to treatment plants.

Following the plants' closure, levels of raw sewage released into the sea are higher, meaning smaller catches and the risk of illness.

"Sewage in the sea today is affecting people and the fish they eat," said the wiry 52-year-old, sat in the shade of an umbrella with the basket carrying the 14 tiny fish he caught.

Before the conflict erupted on July 8 he fished from his boat in Gaza port, going up to three nautical miles out to sea in accordance with the limit imposed by the Israelis.

Now he spends two hours every morning wading through the surf on the beach casting a small net to bring back food for his family. But he says that there are fewer and fewer fish to be caught off the beach because the raised level of untreated sewage is driving them further out to sea.

# Myanmar parliament to scrutinise Suu Kyi charter change bid

AFP, Naypyidaw

Myanmar's parliament could consider a petition by Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition calling for an end to the army's veto on amending the constitution in the former junta-ruled nation, the house speaker said yesterday.

The campaign has garnered nearly five million signatures and has seen opposition leader Suu Kyi -- who is constitutionally barred from becoming president -- challenge the military to support altering the charter, which was drawn up under the previous regime.

"Because it's related to the workings of parliament, which listens to the voice of the people, MPs can consider the people's voice," said Shwe Mann, the speaker of parliament's combined houses and leader of the army-backed ruling party.

He did not specify how parliament, dominated by army officials and ruling party members, would scrutinise the petition.

Shwe Mann added that the petition would not affect the deliberations of a parliamentary committee set up to recommend changes to the controversial constitution.



# Ukraine to recapture Donetsk

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Ukrainian government forces are preparing for the final stage of recapturing the city of Donetsk from pro-Russia separatist rebels after making significant gains that have divided rebel forces, a military spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman, Andriy Lysenko, said Kiev's forces had cut off Donetsk from the other main rebel-held city, Luhansk, on the border with Russia.

"The forces of the anti-terrorist operation are preparing for the final stage of liberating Donetsk. Our forces have completely cut Donetsk off from Luhansk. We are working for liberating both towns but it's better to liberate Donetsk first -- it is more important," Lysenko said.

Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, said Moscow would send humanitarian aid to Ukraine only if all involved parties agreed to the move.

Ukraine has repeatedly said it fears an invasion by Russia under the cover of a humanitarian operation. Western politicians have also said any attempt by Moscow to unilaterally send a humanitarian mission to Ukraine would be seen as an invasion.

One convict was killed and more than 100 escaped when shelling hit a high-security prison in Donetsk, the city council said.

Mortar blasts hit the living areas, administrative headquarters and an electrical substation at the correctional facility in a western district of the city on Sunday evening. By yesterday morning, an unspecified number of escapees had been returned to the facility.

There were reports of sporadic shelling in Donetsk overnight. A growing number of civilian casualties have been reported as artillery bombardments have hit hospitals and homes around the beleaguered city.

More than 1,300 people have been killed and 285,000 have fled their homes in the east of Ukraine due to fierce clashes in four months of what the Red Cross has described as a civil war.



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