

IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS OF LAST WEEK

After three days of talks in Geneva, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov demanded that al-Assad account for his secret stockpile within a week and let international inspectors eliminate all the weapons by the middle of next year. Turkey has voiced a skeptical optimism after the United States and Russia agreed on a plan to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons by the middle of 2014. The Turkish statement said the agreement should not turn into a process whereby regime forces would buy time for new massacres. "This agreement must not be exploited by the Syrian regime and must not turn into a process by which the regime would gain time to carry out new massacres against its people. The announced timeframe is lengthy and susceptible to the exploitation of the regime. The sanctions that will be imposed if the regime does not rapidly and strictly fulfill its obligations and the agreement comes to naught should be spelt out clearly from the start," it said. The statement also said "This agreement should not be perceived as the final solution to the Syrian crisis, and the massacres committed by the regime without resorting to chemical weapons must absolutely be prevented," the statement said. "The ultimate goal in Syria must be to end the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated in this country by the regime over nearly three years, to fulfill the legitimate demands of the population and to enable the people of Syria to establish a legitimate administration." Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu outlined the Turkish government's position and its concerns with regard to developments in Syria at a meeting in Paris with the participation of foreign ministers from the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia. Davutoğlu was invited to the meeting by John Kerry, with whom he exchanged two phone conversations.

In the mean time, The Turkish Air Force shot down a Syrian helicopter on September 16 at the border after the helicopter violated Turkish airspace. Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç said the initiative taken by the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) to shoot down the Syrian helicopter was based on the rules of engagement with Syria. Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) also released an official statement after Arınç's remarks, confirming that Turkish jets had shot down the Syrian helicopter after it violated Turkish airspace. Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has said that Turkey conducted a "punitive action" by downing a Syrian helicopter, justifiable in terms of international justice and rules of engagement as the helicopter violated Turkish air space despite

warnings. Davutoğlu stressed that Turkey would not accept any violation of its borders.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan headed a series of meetings meeting to finalize the highly anticipated democratization package, as senior Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) officials urged the continuation of the peace process, even though they have low expectations of the content of the upcoming reform package. Prime Minister Erdoğan is expected to announce the details of the package. In the meantime BDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş and the party's deputy parliamentary group chair, Pervin Buldan, paid the 10th parliamentary visit to İmralı Island, where Öcalan is currently serving a life sentence. After the visit Buldan told that Öcalan said "It is essential that especially the state creates the sufficient means and opportunities for a deep negotiation to move the process forward," without elaborating on those "sufficient means and opportunities."