

## **Syrian Papers Continue to Rebuff Iraqi Accusations**

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Syrian newspapers continued for a second week to rebuke the Iraqi prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, and other officials for accusing Damascus of sheltering presumed terrorists.

Earlier last month, tension between the two countries escalated when Iraq withdrew its ambassador from Syria and called on Damascus to hand over former Iraqi Baathist cadres accused of plotting the August 19 bomb attacks in Baghdad that killed 96 people and wounded about 600.

The official al-Thawra newspaper, in a September 5 editorial, strongly criticised the “internationalisation” of the crisis in an indirect reference to Maliki’s official demand to the United Nations Security Council to create an international investigation team to look into the bombings.

The daily’s editor-in-chief, Asaad Abboud, wrote that countries seeking international help lacked the capacity to run internal politics, insinuating that the Iraqi appeal to the UN was tantamount to a return to the era of colonialism.

Abboud said all past international investigating committees had failed, giving the example of the UN committee looking into the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, which he said transformed a “criminal probe into a political bazaar”.

The pro-government al-Watan newspaper also criticised the Iraqi call for an international investigating team in a September 2 op-ed article.

Issa al-Ayoubi wrote that by accusing Syria, Maliki had proved that he did not deserve to be in his position, adding that his future as a politician will be condemned by the Iraqi people.

The columnist said that it was not in any country’s interest to be hostile towards Syria as Damascus was key in any strategic solution in the region.

He said that it would be wrong to believe that anybody would support Maliki in his accusations against Syria and his demand for an international investigation.

The same daily said in its September 1 edition that the Iraqi positions towards Syria have provoked the ire of the Syrian people.

The newspaper interviewed ordinary Syrians who said that Maliki had lost all credibility and esteem in the eyes of the people and accused the United States of instigating the crises between the Iraq and Syria.

One interviewee expressed indignation towards Arab countries, which, he said, had stood aside instead of

trying to solve the crisis.

**Focus:** Syria Press Monitor

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