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About CRP News & Background

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EU deals with the increasing number of asylum seekers

The European Union agreed to relocate 60,000 asylum seekers, 40,000 of them from Italy and Greece and 20,000 from outside the EU who are fleeing the violence of their countries, especially Syrians and Eritreans, but also Ethiopians or Sudanese. The voluntary relocation of the 60,000 people will last two years and its distribution will be agreed in July since the European Council – representatives of the governments of the member states – refused the proposal of the European Commission to include mandatory quotas.

The European member states gathered together on 25 June to find solutions to the increasing number of asylum seekers. “The



Photo: Andrew Smith [Wikimedia Commons]

biggest challenge I have seen in European affairs in my time as chancellor”, described the immigration crisis Angela Merkel, the chancellor of Germany which is the EU country that receives more claims of asylum. According to Eurostat, in the first quarter of 2015 there have been 202,785 persons seeking asylum in Europe, 184,800 of them for the first time, which is a 79% more than the same quarter in 2014. Many of them come from Kosovo (26%), Syria (16%) and Afghanistan (7%).

The meeting was not smooth. After deciding to relocate 60,000 asylum seekers, Matteo Renzi, Italy’s Prime Minister, criticised that the plan has not got mandatory quotas on nations and accused other countries of not making enough effort to help the refugees. “Thinking that one country can handle such problems, without considering that we are dealing with Europe’s borders, is evidently a political mistake”, said Renzi. At the same time, Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council, answered: “It will take much time to build a new European consensus on migration”. Even though the decision is about asylum, an international protection granted to a person who



cannot stay safely in his/her country, Tusk underlined the importance of contain the migratory flows. "First and foremost, we need to contain illegal migration and this should be our priority. All those who are not legitimate asylum seekers will have no guarantee that they will stay in Europe".

During 2014, Frontex detected 170,664 migrants following the Central Mediterranean Route to Italy or Malta. Many of them were fleeing the violence of Syria (23%) and Eritrea (20%) and departed from Libya in overcrowded boats with limited fuel. This migratory route towards EU borders became the most used last year. The second one was the Eastern Mediterranean route to Greece and Bulgaria with 50,834 detections; most of them came from Syria and Afghanistan. Among the migrants, the majority of the asylum seekers did not apply for asylum in the country of entrance, like Italy and Greece, but in other member states.

The United Kingdom rejected the plan of relocation because they are not in the Schengen area. Bulgaria and Hungary were also excluded from the agreement. In middle June, Hungary drew a plan to build a four-meter-high fence along its 175 km border with Serbia and the government announced that they will block migrants arriving from safe countries in order to stop their increasing influx. The United Nations Refugee Agency's condemned the fence plan which violates the human right of asylum, they said. This fence reminds the one Bulgaria built along its border with Turkey with the same purpose.

Migration in Hungary is on the rise

In the first quarter of 2015, Hungary has received 33,550 asylum applicants, in the same period last year there were 2,735, as reported by Eurostat. The majority of these asylum seekers come from Kosovo, Afghanistan and Syria. These numbers have made the Western Balkan Route the most used by migrants who want to reach EU borders with over 50,000 detections in the first five months of 2015, according to Frontex. Half of these migrants first crossed the Greek border in their way to Hungary, said Gil Arias-Fernández, Frontex's deputy executive director. The number of total detections in the European borders from January to May rose to 153,000 migrants, 149% more than the same period in 2014.

In July, the EU member states will meet again to decide how they will distribute the 60,000 asylum seekers.



International border between Hungary and Serbia. Photo: Chmeez/Valtameri [Wikimedia Commons]



Greece crisis: Eurozone leaders hold emergency summit

Since 2010, Greece has been the most important issue in economical affair in the European Union and mostly in the Eurozone representing the eighteen countries using the euro currency. After the subprimes crisis, Greece had to face a massive widening of its public debt and a strong recession. Through the years, Greece has received bailouts from the so-called Troika gathering the European Central Bank (ECB), the European Council and the International Monetary Funds (IMF). They all deliver money to Greece if it agrees on tremendous reforms of austerity. For instance, Greece had to raise its taxes, included the VAT, in order to show the creditors Greece wants to payback.

In June 2015 comes the time for Greece to payback its creditors, starting with the IMF to which it owes €1.6 billion. The 30th of this month Greece had claimed to payback. Nonetheless, during the European Council Summit on 22 June, Alexis Tsipras, the Prime Minister of Greece and leader of the left-wing party SYRIZA, aware the creditors he would not be able to deliver this amount of money to the IMF. The efforts of Greece during these 5 years were not efficient enough to gather all the money due to the

IMF. For five years the Greek government had to deal with the austerity at all cost asked by the creditors who wanted great warranties to be paid back and the bargaining of population tired of being restricted because of the bad choices of their government.

The time of negotiation has come again. The stake of these summits would be whether or not Greece deserves an extra-time to pay the bailout back. In parallel, the question of a new bailout would be discussed. Indeed, the Troika (IMF, ECB and the Eurozone) dispose of €7.2 billion ready to be delivered to the Greek government. They would not give it to Greece in this situation on the edge of bankruptcy. If bankruptcy there is, Greece would maybe leave the Eurozone or/and the European Union. On both side, the negotiation of this week would be crucial for their future. It does not mean the agreement would be easy to reach.

From the creditors point of view huge reforms in the fiscal domain needs to be done. As the finance minister of Germany "without anything new, there is nothing for the ministers to prepare for their leaders". This means that the Greek government



needs to change their way of cutting the spending to really be effective in their payment. They ask for a strong package of taxes and austerity measures. For instance, the cut on pension spending has to reach 1% of the GDP. The Hellenic government should focus on early retirement and not-lower income payers. The trouble is that two-thirds of pensioners are either below or near the poverty line. Therefore the population would suffer a lot from this reform. However, the Economy minister Giorgos Stathakis, told the BBC an increase of savings for pension by the rise of the numbers of employee. He also guarantees new tax on wealth, business. The most important is the will to change the VAT for selected items but without targeting electricity, a field pointed out by the Eurozone countries as a great source of income.

The issue brought by the taxation on pension its effect on the suffering of the Greek population stressed the difficulties that austerity delivers. Austerity is the main solution considered by the creditors and the senders of bailout such as IMF and ECB. Nevertheless, the social impact is huge. The population is struggling every day. 20% of the population is living behind the poverty line in 2015 in Greece. Social grievances are going stronger in Greece. SYRIZA itself organized some demonstration in front of the Greek Parliament after the announcement of the negotiation, representing the promise of new cut down in pensions.

In this context the negotiations have been run. Pragmatism should be the keyword to end up on an effective solution. According

to A. Tsipras there would be a relevant solution to this matter as he mentioned it "European history is full of disagreements, negotiations and at the end, compromises. So, after the comprehensive Greek proposals, I am confident that we will reach a compromise". The president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker shared his view waiting for an agreement "by the end of the week". To sum up with the negotiation it seems like the Greek government understood it has to "shouldered its responsibilities", as the French President Francois Hollande says, and that the Troika is ready to be "broad and comprehensive" (Finance Minister of Netherlands).

This good will appeared to be an illusion. Indeed, during the week from 22 to 29 June no agreement was sought nor found. Everyone stayed on their position. The result of all this: the growing risk of bankruptcy for Greece and the shutdown of Greek banks the following Monday. The pragmatic desire at the beginning of the negotiation turned out to a freeze of it. This block is the result of the adamancy of the Troika ideology based on the payback by cut on spending and the fact that Greek government is tired of imposing that amount of struggle to its population. It seems that the technocratic solution reaches its limits. After 5 years of talking, bailouts and restrictions nothing has changed. Greece is still bending over the gap of bankruptcy while the creditors are blaming them not to do enough to get off the hook.

In this way, Tsipras decided to lead a referendum. He submitted to the plebeian



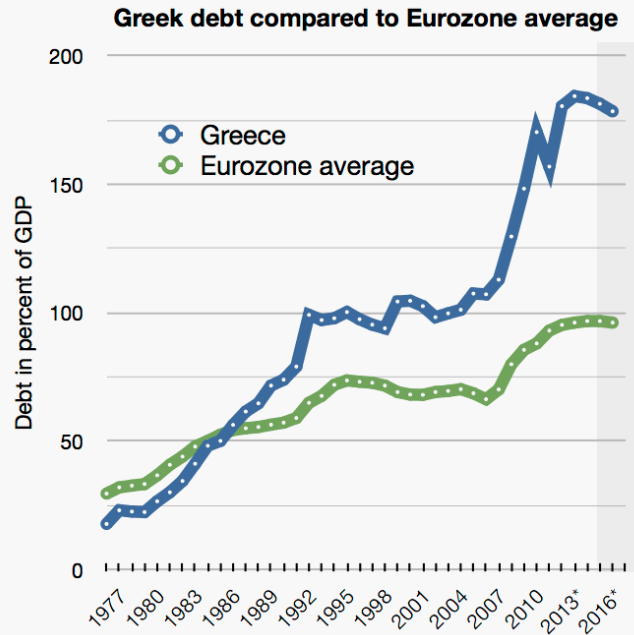
the choice whether or not austerity reforms as the ECB and the IMF should be adopted in Greece. The Greek prime minister asked its population to massively vote the “NO”. This crisis revealed the weaknesses of the Greek economy. It showed that Greece needs to be supported in its effort to build a strong economy. Lot of money was sent to this country in order to save him from bankruptcy. However, the Troika has claimed those bailout back with neoliberal reforms of austerity, drowning the country in a vicious circle in which the economic growth and the wealth created is dedicated to payback of this debts. Instead of using this growth to re-build a stronger economy, it has prejudiced the country and its population. SYRIZA bargained about it, and get elected in January 2015. This call for a referendum is maybe one of the ways to help Greece. This could represent a threat to the unity of the Eurozone. If Greece does not want austerity reforms anymore, it may mean they no longer have the right to be in the Euro group. The Eurozone has been based

on idea of stability and low debts. The “NO” can be seen as a will from the population to move towards a “Grexit”.

This extreme situation is the most reported scenario after the announcement of the vote. It can also mean that the Greeks are tired of living this way. They want to change the policy. The austerity does not look to work for the Greek economy. There is no one single solution for every country in Europe. It may only means that Greek needs a Greek-related solution and not a solution chosen by ideological-stamped institution such as the IMF and the ECB. The Greek are no fools. They know they have to make strong efforts and they need support. For the moment the only support given appears to be sometimes more like obstacles than a help.



A pro-Greece demonstration in Portugal. Photo: Bloco de esquerda [Flickr]



Source: Eurostat

* Source: Ernst & Young using data from Oxford Economics

Greece's debt history since 1977. Euro figures cover the official EuroArea-17 in 1995-2015, EuroArea-12 in 1991-94 and EuroArea-12 (without Eastern Germany) in 1977-1990.
Graph: Spitzl [Wikimedia Commons]



Evidences of war crimes found in the 2014 Israeli-Gaza conflict

A UN report recently released by a special Commission of Inquiry has found evidence of war crimes in the 2014 Israeli-Gaza conflict, committed by both Israeli and Palestinian groups.

According to the report, the death tolls accounted for more than 2,200 Palestinians, 65% of whom were civilians, and 73 deaths on the Israeli side, the majority of whom were militants. Both the Israeli force and Hamas have reacted negatively to the report, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned it as “flawed” and “notoriously biased”. Hamas leaders also rejected the report, defending that their air rockets aimed at Israeli military sites, not civilians.



*Photo taken during the 72hr ceasefire between Hamas and Israel on 6th of August 2014.
Photo: Boris Niehaus (www.1just.de)*

The 2014 Israeli-Gaza conflict, also labelled by the media as “Operation Protective Edge”, took place last summer from 8 July to the end of August 2014. It began when three Israelis teenagers were assumed to be abducted and killed by Palestinian operatives in the West Bank.

The incident quickly escalated into an armed conflict as the Israeli Army launched air strike campaigns to crack down on Hamas in Gaza, followed by the a ground invasion with intense bombardments meant to destroy Hamas’ cross-border attack tunnels. Hamas operatives also responded with a range of more than 6,000 mortars and rockets, most of which, however, fell into unpopulated areas and did not cause much damage.

Israeli forces were accused of violating international humanitarian law and international human rights law with their excessive use of artillery and precision-guided missiles in residential areas. Many of the attacks took place during the month of Ramadan, in which the Palestinian families gathered together to break the Ramadan fast, and during night time, which increased the likelihood of civilian deaths. The panel sought to answer whether these



attacks could be “disproportionate”, purposely commit civilian casualties and as a result, “amount to war crime”.

Although Hamas called the report as a “clear condemnation” of Israeli war crimes perpetrated against Palestinians, and that Israel must be held accountable for its crime in the International Criminal Court, they largely downplayed or ignored their part in the war. In particular, the UN report accused Hamas of its “extrajudicial executions” of 16 collaborators and their “indiscriminate” targets at the Israeli population with rockets and mortars. The tunnel constructed by Hamas that stretches from Gaza to Israel was condemned as a means to “spread terror among the civilian population”. Hamas is ranked as a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, and the European Union.

Besides the huge casualties from both sides, especially of the Palestinian civilians, the conflict has resulted in the displacement of more than 500,000 Palestinians and 10,000 Israelis, which can affect generations to



Burning factory in Sderot, which was hit by a rocket from Gaza. Photo: Natan Flayer

come. One year after the war, Gaza is still in ruins, as tens of thousands of people are still homeless and have to live in temporary shelters, with little access to basic amenities. The conflict also brought not only physical but also psychological damage to the civilians of both sides. Prior to the UN report, Israel also carried out its own report on the Gaza war, which steered clear of its conducts in Gaza.

“the conflict has resulted in the displacement of more than 500,000 Palestinians and 10,000 Israelis”



Tunisia attack: at least 38 reported dead at beach resort

On 26 June 38 people died and 39 were injured in an attack carried out by a gunman in a luxury hotel in Sousse, Tunisia. The gunman was shot by the police after targeting and killing several tourists on the beach and around the hotel's swimming pool. According to witnesses, the assailant reloaded his gun several times and tossed an explosive, and the attack lasted for about 30 minutes, until the police intervened.

Authorities have arrested suspects tied to the attacker, Saif Rezgui, a student who is said to have given few clues about radicalisation to family and friends in his hometown. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack on social media.

The attack was considered one of the worst in Tunisia's modern history. It was the second terrorist attack this year, following the assault on Tunis Bardo museum in March, which left 22 people dead, most of them tourists.

"This is a catastrophe for the economy", said Tourism Minister Salma Loumi at the time. "Our losses will be great, but the loss of human life was even greater", she added. Six million tourists visited Tunisia last year, providing about seven percent of the country's gross domestic product. Tunisia's beaches, historical cities and desert treks attract many visitors. Tourism provides for a

very significant part of the jobs in the country, and the attacks represented a blow in the sector. Tunisia expects to lose at least 515 million dollars this year, a quarter of its estimated annual tourism earning.

A campaign to encourage tourists to return to Tunisia showed images of various terrorist attacks, from the 9/11 attack in New York to the 7/7 London bombings. "Terrorism affects everybody, and that is really the central idea with these images", said Selim Ben Hadj Yahia, managing director in the agency that created the campaign. "If terrorism "can affect big capitals like London, Paris, and New York, then it can also affect us, and we should not boycott such-and-such a destination". The campaign was praised by some, but criticized by others who pointed out the attacks targeted tourists.



Riu Imperial Marhaba and Soviva, Port El Kantaoui, Sousse, Tunisia. Photo: Tony Hisgett



Intensifying fights near the Turkish border

In June, fighting between ISIS and the Kurdish militia restarted in the Syrian border. On 15 June, Kurdish fighters confirmed that they had taken control of Tel Abyad, a city on the Turkish-Syrian border. The city is considered an important strategic point since it allowed Kurdish forces to cut ISIS's supply line to its self-proclaimed capital of Raqqa. During the confrontations thousands of Syrians fled Tel Abyad, which

had been controlled by ISIS since last August. The clashes between ISIS and Kurdish forces displaced 23,000 people who fled to Turkey, according to UNHCR.

The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and an alliance of rebels backed by US-led air strikes seized important parts of the territory from ISIS. Besides the important strategic border town of Tal Abyad, they also took control of strategic bases seized



Six batteries of NATO-backed missile defense systems have been set up in southeastern Turkey to protect against aerial attacks from war-torn Syria.



by ISIS from the Syrian regime and the town of Ain Issa, taking control of territory within 50 kilometres of Raqqa.

The Associated Press reported ISIS'S black and white flag was taken down in Tal Abyad and replaced with Kurdish YPG's yellow flag. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that the Kurdish forces seized Tal Abyad with help from the Free Syrian Army. The takeover of the town marked an important setback for ISIS by depriving the group of a direct route to Raqqa. However, ISIS still controls about a third of Iraq and Syria, including Mosul, the second-largest Iraqi city. The extremist group continues to fight Iraqi security forces and Shia militias for territory.



Six batteries of U.S. made, but NATO-backed, missile defense systems have been set up in southeastern Turkey to protect against aerial attacks from war-torn Syria. Single battery in foreground Gaziantep, Turkey in the background.

On June 25 ISIS launched attacks on two fronts in northern Syria, re-entering the Kurdish town of Kobani and seizing parts of the city of Hasaka. ISIS militants re-entered the key Syrian border city of Kobani and killed at least 145, according to Kurdish officials. A detailed report published by Human Rights Watch stated armed militants believed to be members of ISIS deliberately targeted civilians in an attack in the northern Syrian city of Kobani and a

nearby village. "By all accounts, this was a planned attack on the civilian population of this area", said Letta Tayler, senior terrorism and counterterrorism researcher at Human Rights Watch.

The attack on the predominantly Kurdish town of Kobani was one of the biggest massacres of civilians by ISIS in Syria. ISIS fighters were reported to have entered the town in five cars disguised as members of the YPG and Syrian rebel groups. The assault included at least three suicide car bombs.

The Kurdish militia described the attack on Kobani as a suicide mission rather than an attempt to capture the town close to the Turkish border. "Daesh's attack was a suicide mission. Its aim wasn't to take the city but to create terror", YPG spokesman Redur Xelil said, using the Arabic acronym to name the extremist group. Two days after the attack on Kobani, Kurdish forces declared they had fully secured the Syrian border town and killed more than 60 ISIS militants.

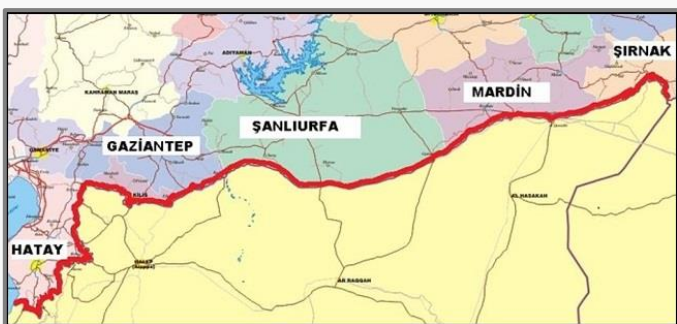
Kobani was the site of one of the biggest battles against ISIS last year. The Kurdish YPG took control of the town with the help of US air strikes after months of fighting.



Kurdish refugees from Kobane, Syria in refugee camp on the border at Suruc, Turkey.



On 25 June the militants carried a separate assault to capture government-held parts of the city of Hasaka. Unlike the attack in Kobani it appeared to be aimed at winning control over the parts of the city which is divided into areas controlled by Bashar al-Assad's government and the YPG. On the following day ISIS managed to advance in Hasaka but army air strikes hindered the attack. The city of Hasaka is important to all sides fighting because of its position between ISIS-held territories in Syria and Iraq, and its closeness to the Turkish border. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated 50,000 people were displaced within Hasaka and 10,000 fled north towards the Turkish border. The attacks which began on 24 June marked the returning to the offensive after weeks of defeats at the hands of Kurdish forces supported by US air strikes.



Turkish cities near the Syrian border

Meanwhile, after two years of fighting for Layramoun Square in Aleppo, rebels said they had seized the area from government forces. Government-held areas on the city of Daraa, in the south of Syria, were also attacked by Syrian rebels.

Timeline of events in June

- **June 15:** Kurdish militias and rebel forces seize ISIS-held Tel Abyad border crossing in northern Syria.
- **June 23:** ISIS announces the destruction of two ancient shrines in the historical city of Palmyra.
- **June 24/25:** ISIS attacks Kobani and seizes part of Hasaka, the main city in north-eastern Syria; Rebel factions initiate a battle to capture the government-held city of Daraa in the south of Syria.
- **June 26:** ISIS kills 146 civilians in Kobani; ISIS suicide bomber kills at least 20 people in Hasaka.

“armed militants believed to be members of ISIS deliberately targeted civilians in an attack in the northern Syrian city of Kobani”



Continuing conflict in Yemen

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), considered to be one of the most dangerous branches of al-Qaeda, released a video on 16 June stating that its leader, Nasser al-Wuhayshi, was killed. He was killed by a US drone strike. Al-Wuhayshi was a high profile terrorist leader and formerly a



Nasir al-Wuhayshi, former leader and founder of AQAP.

close accomplice of Osama Bin Laden. Of Yemeni origin, he had been active since the 1990s and became the leader of AQAP in 2009. Although the operation was successful in killing the leader of AQAP, the organization has already named its next leader, Qasim al-Raymi, who is potentially more dangerous than al-Wuhayshi.

On 29 June, Yemen's capital city of Sanaa was hit by a bomb attack which claimed the lives of at least 28 people. The bomb, which was placed inside a car, targeted a military hospital. The attack was claimed by the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State (ISIS). It was conducted against the Houthis who are now the dominant group in Yemen.

Yemen was thrown into conflict after the Arab Spring, when the Houthis eventually took control of the capital city of Sanaa in 2014. Houthis are a Zaidi group, a branch of Shi'a Islam, which are currently participating in a complex war in Yemen fought by multiple factions. The Houthis came to control parts of Yemen and Sanaa in 2014, eventually taking over the government in early 2015. This led to a civil war between the Houthis and the forces loyal to the former President Abd Rabbuh





AQAP fighters in Yemen, 2014.

Mansur Hadi, who resigned after the Houthi takeover and fled to Saudi Arabia in March. The power vacuum created in the country due to the civil war gave the AQAP the opportunity to take control of large portions of land in the east and south-east parts of Yemen. Saudi Arabia, along with eight other Arab states, has launched a military intervention in March, consisting mostly of airstrikes against the Houthis.



Flag used by the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The involvement of external powers is representative of the grand scheme of political relations in the Middle East. A Shi'a takeover in the south of Saudi Arabia is threatening for the Al-Saud, who are particularly wary of the spread of Shi'a Islam which could increase the influence of Iran. However, the Saudi accusations against Iran concerning providing support for the Houthis has not been proven.



AQAP fighters in Yemen.

Recently, as the bomb attack shows, ISIS has also entered the conflict in Yemen, finding opportunities created by the civil war. While ISIS will most likely be targeting the Houthis, they can also be expected to attempt to take advantage of the situation to enhance their power. ISIS and AQAP have not formed an alliance and remain opposed to each other. The new and possibly more dangerous AQAP leader, in addition to the ISIS activity in Yemen, promises further conflict in the country.

“Yemen was thrown into conflict after the Arab Spring, when the Houthis eventually took control of the capital city”



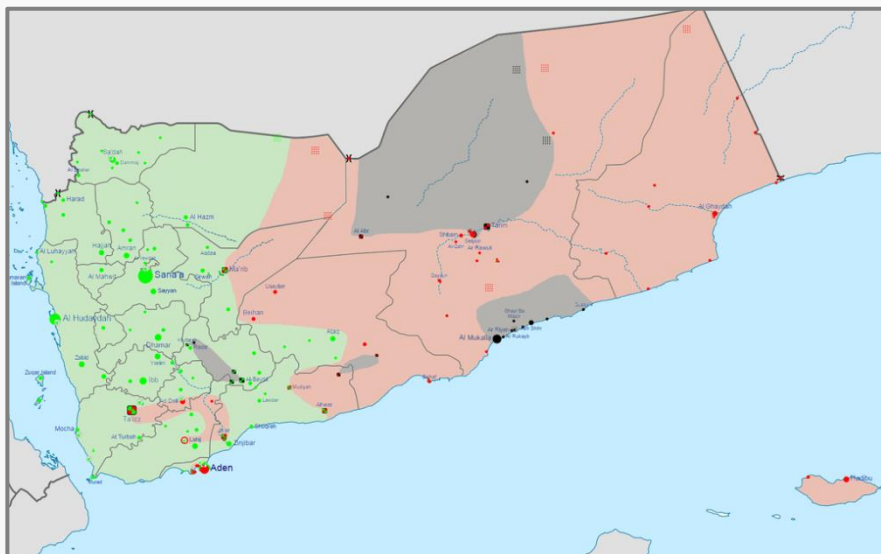
New Snowden documents suggest UK and Australian intelligence support for US drone strike in Yemen

In 2012 the National Security Agency (NSA) launched several drone strikes in Yemen in order to fight AQAP (al-Qaeda) and its pressure onto Yemeni cities. About 35 attacks caused between 280 and 522 deaths of members of the terrorist organisation. However, according to studies, at least 55 civilians died along in these attacks.

These operations in Yemen were conducted against AQAP by the CIA, which was already engaged into Pakistan and Iraq against al-Qaeda grip in those regions. The operations paid off by killing several leaders as Abdulwahhab al-Homaiqani, Mohammed Saeed al Umda and others militants. At that time, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, wanted to be more involved into the counterterrorism war and personally decided of the attacks.

According to the latest documents, released in June 2015 by Edward Snowden, the NSA was not working alone and received the support of another international agency, the GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) which is the British equivalent to NSA, a security organisation in charge to provide signal intelligence.

Soon after a group of British lawyers claimed the legality of this collaboration can be seriously questioned, the drone strikes in Yemen have not been launched during a war period and outside an international conflict. Both the GCHQ and NSA refused to comment the last revelations, and refused to answer to any newspaper.



Insurgency in Yemen detailed Map

- Controlled by Revolutionary Committee
- Controlled by Hadi-led government and the Southern Movement
- Controlled by Ansar al-Sharia/AQAP forces

Current territorial situation in Yemen. AQAP territory is shown in gray, primarily in the Al Bayda and Hadhramaut provinces.
Map: BlueHyperCane761 [Wikimedia Commons]



Egyptian court confirms death sentence of Mohamed Morsi

The Egyptian court sentenced Mohamed Morsi to death on 17 May for a mass prison break in 2011. The court adjourned until June 16 the final ruling on death sentence to ousted president Morsi. The court sentenced Morsi to life in jail on charges of – a different case – spying for Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and Iran. The court also confirmed death sentences against 16 other defendants on charges of delivering secret documents abroad between 2005 and 2013. In Egypt, a life sentence is 25 years in jail. The court still has to decide whether to confirm or commute death sentence against Morsi and more than 100 others related to a 2011 jailbreak. The general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Mohamed Badie was also sentenced to 25 years in jail on spying charges.



Mohamed Morsi. Photo: Wilson Dias/ABr - Agência Brasil

The ruling reaffirms an initial decision in the case in May, in which Morsi and more than 100 others were sentenced to death. The confirmation on June 16 was necessary because Egyptian law requires judges to seek the advice of Egypt's official Muslim religious authority, the grand mufti, before finalizing sentences of capital punishment. The defendants now have the right to appeal through the courts.

The army ousted Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president, in July 2013 after mass protests calling for an end to his divisive one-year rule. Morsi has already been sentenced to 20 years in jail in a separate trial on charges of inciting violence.



Mohamed Morsi. Photo: Wilson Dias/ABr - Agência Brasil



WikiLeaks released Saudi Arabia cables

On 19 June 2015 at 1pm GMT, WikiLeaks published 61,304 cables and confidential documents from Saudi Arabia on the Internet.

The leak concerns mainly the Foreign Ministry's communications between foreign entities including Saudi Embassies around the world but also reports from the Kingdom's General Intelligence Services and the Ministry of Interior. Saudi government decided not to question the official nature of the documents and asked its population to ignore them.

Saudi Arabia is a monarchy led by King Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud who is also the Prime Minister since 23 January 2015.



Supplicating Pilgrim at Masjid Al Haram, Mecca. Photo: Ali Mansuri [Wikimedia Commons]

The Islamic kingdom is accused by Western countries to be a dictatorship not respecting human rights. But it is also known as the USA and United Kingdom best ally in the Middle East and has a status of superpower in this area. These statuses are due to Saudi Arabia's oil reserves basis of its influence in International Affairs.

Julian Assange, one of the founder and representative of WikiLeaks, gave a few words about the Saudi Arabia leak, in order to aware people about the threat it represents according to him.

"The Saudi Cables lift the lid on an increasingly erratic and secretive dictatorship that has not only celebrated its 100th beheading this year, but which has also become a menace to its neighbours and itself."

Last year, Saudi Arabia became the world's biggest importer of weapons and defensive system according to the IHS Jane's Global Defence Trade Report. Saudi Arabia spent over \$6.4 billion and current studies predict that the trend will continue to rise until 52 percent import increase to \$9.8 billion in 2015.

"Growth in Saudi Arabia has been dramatic and, based on previous orders,





Julian Assange. Photo: Espen Moe [Flickr]

these numbers are not going to slow down,” according to IHS expert Ben Moores.

We still do not know for sure how WikiLeaks managed to obtain the documents but the Saudi Arabian government suspect that it was during a security breach in May attributed to the Yemeni Cyber Army. So whether it was WikiLeaks' hackers, whether the Yemeni Cyber Army gave the stolen documents to the website in order to release it.

WikiLeaks is a website created in 2006. It is hunting and spreading for free worldwide government's secrets, imposing a policy of transparency. The website became famous after releasing in April, 2010 a video called “collateral murder”. The video is showing a burr of the US Army in Iraq on 12 July 2007. The video was hidden in the US Army archives until WikiLeaks obtained it from an anonymous source that the US government

identified as Bradley Manning, former American soldier who showed off about the leak in front of a friend. He was arrested on 6 June 2010 for high treason and sentenced to 35 years in prison.

But the real scandal in Europe was on 28 November 2010 when 250,000 diplomatic cables were sold to five main Western newspapers (Der Spiegel, El Pais, Le Monde, The Guardian, The New York Times). Then, WikiLeaks and its sulphurous face Julian Assange (also in trouble with the Sweden justice for personal matter) became target to the US government and other world power victims or potential victim of the website.

It has been now five years that Assange found the Ecuador Embassy in London as a shelter, but he is still looking for a new one after France recently refused to host him.

WikiLeaks continues its contrived policy of transparency upon the government of the world. Besides, each week, there will be more cables released about Saudi Arabia, according to WikiLeaks website.



Riyadh. Photo: BroadArrow [Wikipedia]



Boko Haram crisis: raid in Niger leaves dozens dead

The Nigerian-based Boko Haram is infamous for its kidnappings and terrorist attacks, such as the abduction of 200 women in Nigeria in 2014, which launched an international movement of solidarity. The group's final purpose is to create a caliphate where they could establish Sharia law.



Since March 2015, Boko Haram is affiliated to ISIS, in order to "extend the caliphate to West Africa", but also to multiply the media cover of the extremist Islam group. This collaboration of international terrorism could threaten the greater region and push West African governments to react. Financially supported from Saudi Arabia and other oil monarchies, the group is well funded in weapons with having direct support from France and the United States.

Their double games policy forces these countries to fight against Boko Haram in the one hand, but to support indirectly the group on the other hand. Indeed, France is selling weapons to Saudi Arabia, who is itself providing weapons and money to Boko Haram. According to French international relations experts, France cannot cut one of its most important customers, and therefore, closes its eyes on what happens behind the curtains.



The European countries and United States therefore condemn officially the actions of Boko Haram, while the number of deaths caused by the group reaching 15 000 dead people since 2009.

The report of the latest Boko Haram attacks in June is the following. The group committed several attacks into two villages



in Niger (close to the Nigerian border), killing 38 persons and wounding 3 others. The attack was loud and violent; the group setting homes on fire on its way, killing people with shotguns or fire.

After this attack, the group left to find refuge in Nigeria. Niger's security forces were launched on several fields, with a deployment of forces in the air and on the ground, in order to find and arrest them, and provide them to commit more attacks of this kind.

In N'Djamena, Chad's capital, a double suicide attack considered as Boko Haram's caused the death of 33 people and wounded more than 100. Chad fought back; launching airstrikes on several basements of the Boko Haram group in Nigeria. This attack in Chad could be a consequence to the growing place of the country into the fight against the organization.

However, Boko Haram's presence in different countries in order to create a caliphate is a weakness for the group; the victim governments are now creating an alliance to fight back and clear the zones in their countries but also in their neighbours to push away the threat that represents the group for all of them. Therefore to face the radical Islamists, a coalition of countries decided to gather their armies and to launch a common campaign: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin have determined to eradicate the jihadist threat. Indeed, 8,700 soldiers from these countries will join the new military force, which will be deployed on 30 July. A Nigerian commandant will be the head of the operations, which confirms the willingness

of its new president – Muhammad Buhari – to fight against Boko Haram.

The Nigerian government will indeed provide initial funds for the coalition, which represents 100 million of US dollars. Moreover the administration receive help from countries such as United States, which – in order to support their fight – sends financial support, in an amount of about 5 million US dollars.

Nevertheless, providing funds on a long term period could be problematic, so that the Nigerian government also calls for financial support from the African Union and the UN to provide forces to the coalition.

200 brainwashed women are now fighting for Boko Haram

Witnesses testify that some of the 219 schoolgirls kidnapped in April, in Chibok are now fighting for the Islamist group Boko Haram after being brainwashed. Many women who claimed living in the same camp that the 219 girls kidnapped from school in Chibok in April, testified that some of them were brainwashed and trained by Boko Haram to fight for the Islamist group. They insure that they saw some of them carrying weapons, cutting non-Islamic men's throat and punishing young girls for not being able to recite from the Quran. Despite the many witnesses, the testimonies are not proved yet but coherent with Amnesty International research in the area according to which it is part of the modus operandi of Boko Haram.



Taliban attack Afghan parliament

Kabul has become the land of war and hatred since only in the last month it was the scene of death from an attack on Park Palace Guest House, where people were trapped amid gunfire and another one from Kabul's international airport, where a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a European convoy in mission there. On 22 June 2015, the Afghan parliament in Kabul was attacked by a suicide bomber and six gunmen.



An inside view of the old Afghan parliament building.

The attack was timed to coincide with the appearance in parliament of Afghanistan's new defence minister Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai. The terrorist action began when a suicide car bomb exploded near the outer walls of the compound to

facilitate the entry of the armed group. The terrorists tried to storm inside but were blocked by the security forces. They took refuge in a nearby building and started a gunfire battle. There were several explosions and a rocket launched from a location unspecified, struck the roof of the parliament. During the explosions and the black smoke, Vice President Sarwar Danish, was immediately encircled by security men and evacuated with other members of parliament. Ebadullah Karimi police spokesman said that the six gunmen were killed during a gun battle but at the same time there were at least 28 civilians wounded and 2 deaths: a woman and a child.

The parliament attack was claimed by the Taliban, whose spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid wrote on Twitter: "Parliament of the puppet administration of Kabul is under heavy martyrdom-seekers attack at a time which they were casting confidence vote for the Minister of Defence".

Many were the criticisms against the security forces for not preventing the attack, especially from the lawmaker Farhad Sediqi that said: "this is another Taliban action well organised that shows a



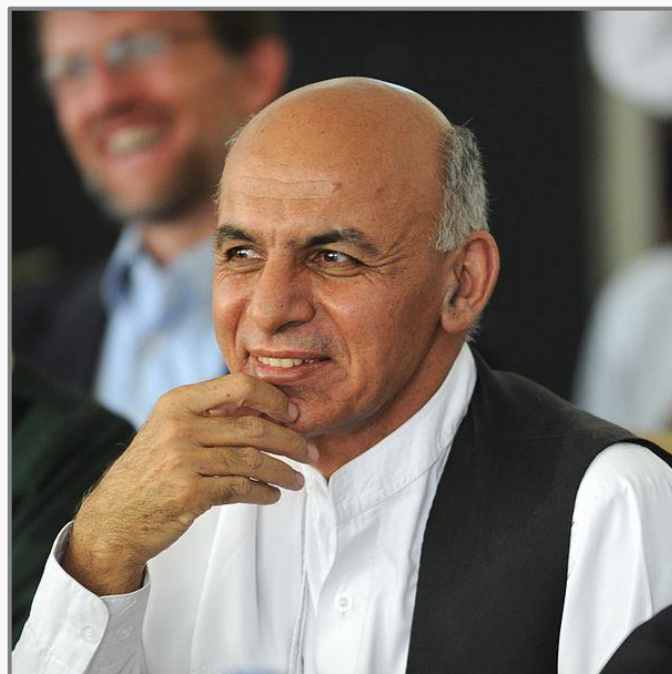
big failure in the intelligence and security departments of the government”.

Between 1996 and 2001 the Taliban fighters presided over the Afghan territory through the withdrawal of foreign forces and the reduction in US air strikes. In fact the terrorist group extended its winning program occupying another district of the country: Dash-e-Archi, in the northern province of Kunduz. Archi was the second neighbouring district to fall in two days. Nasruddin Saeedi, the district governor escaped to Kunduz city and told Reuters by telephone that there were many foreign fighters. After asking for reinforcements, nobody came.

The parliament attack was condemned by US and Pakistan. The American embassy in Kabul said: “this attack is a clear form of contempt for democracy and the rule of law”. The government of Pakistan reaffirmed its determination to combat terrorism in coordination with the Afghan government. This decision of an agreement to strengthen cooperation against terrorist operations was also been criticised.

Nowadays, there are suicide attacks two or three times a week in the capital Kabul, targeting not only the police but also foreign aid workers, diplomats, politicians and civilians. The Afghanistan situation is

marked on one side by the political and military crisis, after the offensive of the United States in 2001 and on the other side by the lack of credibility of the new government led by Ashraf Ghani. There are no political reforms for the construction of a dialogue and power of the Taliban is not stopped yet. The attack on the parliament, political and economic heart, marks the beginning of the vulnerability of the security forces and the confirmation of Taliban power that acts on the territory undisturbed.



Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan .

“another Taliban action well organised that shows a big failure in the intelligence and security departments of the government”



Attack in China's Xinjiang during religious holiday

At least 18 people are dead after ethnic Uighurs attacked police with knives and bombs at a traffic checkpoint in China's Western Xinjiang region, accorded to US-based Radio Free Asia (RFA). The attack occurred in the westernmost city in China, Kashgar, close to the Central Asian border. Suspects killed several police officers with knives and bombs after speeding through a traffic checkpoint reported by the RFA, citing a police officer nearby, Turghun Memet. According to the officer armed police responded to the attack and killed 15 suspects "designated as terrorists". The dead toll has been said between 18 and 28 but there were no answer or comment from Xinjiang Government or the public security departments. Such incidents are frequently reported in overseas media but not confirmed by the Chinese government until days later, if ever.

The attack comes at the beginning of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, a sensitive time in the region after recent year's tensions that have led to bloodshed between Muslim Uighurs that call the region home and the Han Chinese. Hundreds have been killed across the region, blamed by Beijing on Islamist militants.



*Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region within the People's Republic of China.
Map: TUBS [Wikimedia Commons]*

Exiled Uighur groups and human rights activists say repressive government policies in Xinjiang, including controls on Islam and on Uighur culture, have provoked unrest, a claim that Beijing denies. Uighurs risk fines or detention for wearing veils or growing beards and some are warned against observing Ramadan Month. Authorities have "encouraged" party members, civil servants, teachers and students not to fast during Ramadan "for the sake of their health, work and study."



Charleston church shooting: White gunman arrested after killing nine in hate crime

Nine people were killed after a gunfire at a historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina. The shooting happened on 17 June inside the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church, whose pastor Clementa Pinckney, a Democratic member of the South Carolina Senate, was named as one of the dead. Eight of the victims were killed inside the church and one more died on the way to hospital.



*The Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church.
Photo: Cal Sr [Flickr]*

Charleston police chief Greg Mullen commented that the shooting was "a hate crime", and they "are going to do everything in our power to find this individual, to lock the gunman up, to make sure he does not hurt anyone else."

President Barack Obama commented he and his wife, Michelle, knew 41-year-old Reverend Clementa Pinckney, the pastor who was killed along with eight others. "To say our thoughts and prayers are with them and their families and their community doesn't say enough to convey the heartache and the sadness and the anger that we feel," he continued.

An all-night manhunt began the same day to capture the suspected white male. The FBI identified the shooter as Dylann Roof, a 21-year-old white man from Columbia, South Carolina. Roof was still on the run next day of the shooting, despite a massive manhunt launched by local police with federal back-up. Finally Roof was taken into custody during a traffic stop in Shelby, North Carolina, about a four-hour drive from the scene of the church shooting. He waived extradition from North Carolina on Thursday and was taken to a waiting police car wearing a bulletproof vest, with



shackles on his feet and his hands cuffed behind his back.

Chief Mullen commented that on the day of the shooting Roof sat with churchgoers inside the church for about an hour before opening fire, "This individual committed a tragic, heinous crime last night," he continued.

A man identified himself as the shooter's uncle said his father gave him a handgun as a 21st birthday present. "I don't have any words for it," the uncle, Carson Cowles, commented. Also Roof's mother, declined to comment when reached by phone. In a Facebook profile belonging to him Roof is seen wearing a jacket featuring the flags of apartheid era South Africa and white-ruled Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Roof has also had been to jail and court records show a pending felony drug case and a past misdemeanour trespassing charge, as reported by the Associated Press.

The shooting happened during a Bible study class in the historic church, which has been a Charleston institution since 1816, with its roots stretching back to a religious group of free blacks and slaves organised in 1791. It also stoked memories of an additional burden borne by blacks: the hate crimes and terrorist attacks that have targeted their places of worship for generations. Namely reminding every American about 15 September 1963, the bombing of the 16th Street Church in Birmingham, Alabama, when Ku Klux Klan terrorists killed four girls.

The attack came two months after the fatal shooting of an unarmed black man, Walter Scott, by a white police officer in neighbouring North Charleston, which increased racial tensions.



*A prayer vigil at Morris Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church.
Photo: Nomader [Wikimedia Commons]*

Confederate flag debate after Charleston church shooting

The debate over the Confederate battle flag from the American Civil War escalated after the Charleston Church Shooting. The shooter Dylan Roof's photographs with the flag in hand fired up more opposition against the usage of the "Stars and Bars" and turned into a full-blown Confederate controversy. The flag is a source of pride for many in the South and a remembrance of its soldiers killed 150 years ago but others see it as a symbol of oppression and of a dark chapter when 11 rebelling Confederate states fought to keep blacks enslaved. South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley called for lawmakers to remove the flag from public grounds and in Alabama, Governor Robert Bentley unilaterally ordered the immediate removal of the Confederate Banners. At the same time national retailers like amazon.com, Walmart, Sears and Etsy began to remove merchandise depicting the Confederate Battle Flag.



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Demonstrations against planned hike on electricity prices in Armenia

■ Thousands of protesters have blocked a major street in downtown Yerevan, capital city of Armenia and after demonstrators marched toward presidential palace, they faced off with the riot police. During the unrest which progressed almost a week, more than 230 protesters and journalists are detained by the police. Planned hike on the prices of electricity was more than 16 percent beginning in August. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan suspended the electricity hikes after the protests.

General election in Turkey leads to hung parliament

■ Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP), which had ruled Turkey uninterruptedly since 2002, lost its parliamentary majority in the recent general election on June 7, receiving approximately 41% of the votes. Despite not being able to reach the 276 seats required to win a majority, the AKP remains the largest party in the National Assembly. The Republican People's Party maintains its position as the second largest party with minor losses, whereas the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) has made gains. One of the most important outcomes, however, is the success of the left-wing and pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) which managed to overcome the 10% threshold and broke the three-party balance of previous years. Rumours of various coalition possibilities are circulating in Ankara, yet the options are difficult since the parties have been opposed to each other in many aspects. It seems particularly unlikely for the MHP and HDP to cooperate which renders the idea of a coalition against the AKP futile. If no coalition is negotiated, President Erdogan is expected to give the mandate to the AKP to form a minority government. If such a government does not survive, however, there will be another election.

Palestinian unity government to resign

■ Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has held an emergency meeting with Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah to discuss the fate of the Palestinian unity government, which was formed last year and comprised members of both Fatah and Hamas. Final decision has yet to be made, as Fatah accuses Hamas for its failure to cooperate in consensus efforts, while Hamas official has stated that Hamas would reject any unilateral dissolution. The government's inability to reconcile the two factions has reflected the long-running division between them, as Fatah currently headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah and Hamas claims control over Gaza.



Suicide attack on Kuwait mosque

■ A suicide bomber of the extremist militia Islamic State (IS) blew himself up in a Shiite mosque in Kuwait killing at least 25 people. According to statements from the Interior Ministry, more than 220 were injured. The attack occurred during the second week of Ramadan on 26 June, just when 2,000 believers gathered for Friday prayers in the temple. The attack in Kuwait claimed by IS-jihadists marks the first attack of this kind on Shiites in the Gulf emirate. Approximately one-third of the 1.3 million inhabitants of Kuwait are Shiites. The Kuwaiti government accused the terrorist militia that the attack was directed against the unity of the people. In recent weeks, the IS-militia already perpetrated deadly attacks on Shiite mosques in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Sunni extremists consider the members of the Shiite denomination as infidels and nonbelievers. Also in Iraq, the IS group regularly commits attacks on Shiite pilgrims, mosques and residential districts.

Voting delays in Burundi after poll stations attacked

■ On 29 June 2015, people of Burundi were called to vote for the national and local elections. During the night many polling stations were attacked by armed groups and the day after the opening of the polls, a grenade exploded in a polling station situated in Bujumbura, the capital. Bizimana Godefroid, Director General of Police said that the armed groups that tried to approach to the polling stations were stopped by the security forces. The opposition and the International Community invited Burundi citizens to not vote after that the authorities of Burundi refused to postpone the elections. According to the US in Burundi there were not conditions for credible elections, so Washington decided to suspend the technical assistance to the Central Election Commission. The reality is that: the chaos in Burundi broke out when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his candidacy for the third consecutive term and many people, including opposition leaders were killed.

Ethiopian elections: no votes for the opposition

■ This year's parliamentary elections in Ethiopia mark a 100 percent victory for the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRFD) and its allies. So far, the opposition in the Ethiopia parliament was nevertheless represented with a mandate. Now, the ruling party has also taken over this place. Consequently, the only representative of the opposition, who had recently sat for the constituency of Addis Ababa in the parliament, is forced to give up their place and called this year's election an "undemocratic disgrace". The reason for this is the strong suppression of the opposition, the press and civil society. Furthermore, political analysts voiced criticism concerning the fact that the political landscape in Ethiopia is not open and that there is no competition between the parties. Before the elections, the ruling government had already arrested the opposition and critical journalists. While the government has successfully put its focus on the economic development of the country, the human rights situation is worrisome and when it comes to freedom of the press, Ethiopia occupies one of the last places in an international comparison.



Double suicide bomb attack in Chad

■ At least 27 people, including four suspected Boko Haram fighters, have been killed in a series of attacks in Chadian capital, N'Djamena, according to a government spokesperson. Suicide bombers attacked two police stations, police headquarters and police academy. Police cadets were attending a training course at the academy. At least 100 people were injured in two simultaneous attacks.

Hong Kong rejects Beijing-backed reforms

■ Hong Kong politicians have voted down election reforms as pro-democracy politicians united in vetoing the Beijing-backed reforms. Most of the pro-government lawmakers staged a walkout as the bill headed for defeat. Only 8 votes casted to support the bill against the 28 denying it. Hong Kong, in negotiations and in protest, pleaded and demanded for nearly two decades that Beijing allow Hong Kong's leader to be elected by the general public. The measure that failed would have allowed public to elect cities next Chief Executive from a slate of two to three candidates nominated by the China's ruling Communist Party. The pro-democracy camp that vetoed the legislation argued that it allowed Beijing to screen the candidates and make the elections meaningless. Beijing's supporters however argued that some progress was better than none and Hong Kong should have embraced this historic chance.

“pro-democracy politicians united in vetoing the Beijing-backed reforms”



A panoramic view of the Hong Kong skyline taken from a path around Victoria Peak. Photo: Diliff [Wikimedia Commons]



Puerto Rico's governor calls for bankruptcy, adviser says "insolvent"

■ Puerto Rico, the Caribbean island enjoys a special status: it is an American territory overseas, which means that its people are born like US citizens but they have their own Constitution. The Governor of Puerto Rico, Alejandro Garcia Padilla, announced that the island is no longer able to pay the interests, approximately \$70 billion of debt. This debt is expressed in the form of municipal bonds, held by mutual funds or American investors. About that, the Americans are worried. The Governor is engaged to searching a negotiated settlement with creditors, because Puerto Rico is incapacitated to pay the debt. The island has three and a half million inhabitants, more indebted than any other US state. The default of Puerto Rico will be a direct damage to the accounts of investors and to the municipal bond market. This damage will cause an increase of the cost of indebtedness of local Americans. Steven Rhodes, the retired US bankruptcy judge said: "Puerto Rico urgently needs help according to survive to the imminent default".



US Supreme Court rules in favour of same-sex marriage

■ A long and often ugly dispute has been decided on Friday 26, June by the highest courts of the USA. Hailed as a "victory for love", the right of homosexual couples to marry legally is now guaranteed by the American Constitution and is admissible in all 50 states. The previously existing prohibitions in 14 states must be lifted and in 36 states plus the Federal District Washington DC gay marriage is currently legal. The decision of the US Supreme Court marks the next victory for same-sex marriage after the referendum in Ireland and President Barack Obama described the judgment as a major step on the road to equality of gays and lesbians. This landmark decision is the biggest legal success for advocates of gay marriage in the United States and is a major step towards ending decades of discrimination. Moreover, this historical bombshell is not only a realization of America's highest constitutional claim "All men are created equal", but the judgment of the US Supreme Court also sets a global benchmark and model for many other countries.



■ News in Brief

International relations

China issues report attacking US Human Rights Record

■ In a report released on 25 June China counters US criticism of its human rights records. China accused the United States of racial discrimination and of being “haunted by spreading guns and frequent occurrence of violent crimes”, the report said. It also criticized the US for conducting surveillance on civilians and world leaders. China’s report is released each year in the same week the US state department issues its annual global human rights report. Human rights are a source of tension between the two countries.

NSA spied on French presidents

■ According to information from WikiLeaks, the US has spied on the three French President Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande. The French government has responded indignantly to the years of spying on France’s presidents by the US secret service NSA and the Elysée Palace declared spying among allies to be “unacceptable”. The information was made public when WikiLeaks published top secret documents according to which the phones of three French President Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy and Hollande were intercepted by the United States. According to the documents published by WikiLeaks, the spy action against the French heads of state took place from at least 2006 until 2012. In addition to the presidents, other high-ranking representatives of France have been monitored as well as French enterprises. The United States neither commented nor denied the spy action, but the White House in Washington assured only that Hollande is not being monitored in the present.



United Nations report on human rights violation in Eritrea

■ The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights published a year-long report which accuse the Eritrean regime of President Isaias Afwerki of crimes against humanity, such as extrajudicial executions, torture, national service and forced labour. The human rights violation also includes arbitrary arrest, surveillance and censorship, among others. The government uses totalitarian practices and “it is not law that rules Eritreans, but fear”, says the investigation that gathered more than 700 testimonies. This climate forces citizens to flee their country seeking asylum in Europe. The UN Commission recommends the international community to protect these people.



United Nations soldiers, part of United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), monitoring Eritrea-Ethiopia boundary.

UN Peacekeepers face new sex abuse claims

■ United Nations peacekeepers have been accused of sexually abusing street children in the Central African Republic capital of Bangui. The allegations against UN peacekeepers came from an internal UN report. Marie Deschamps, former Canadian Supreme Court Justice, was appointed to lead an external independent investigation on the allegations of sexual abuse of children. An earlier report released in June accused UN peacekeepers of swapping goods for sex in Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Haiti and South Sudan.





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