

*"Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues"*

# Cultural Relations Policy

## News and Background

# September 2013





## About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

As an initiative of ICRP, the content of this magazine is written and edited by student authors. The project, as part of the Institute's Internship Programme provides the opportunity to strengthen professional skills.



## Editorial Team

**Series Editor** | András Lőrincz

**Authors – September 2013** | Endre András Kozma, Zuzana Balcová, Eszter Balogh, Csilla Morauszki

**Executive Publisher** | Csilla Morauszki

© **Institute for Cultural Relations Policy**

ICRP Geopolitika Kft

45 Gyongyosi utca, Budapest 1031 – Hungary

**ISSN 2063-8205**

---

## Contents

---



- 
- 01** UN warns over climate change

---

  - 04** 400 kilometre-long human chain for the Catalanian independence

---

  - 05** German federal election: Angela Merkel wins again

---

  - 07** New Iranian leadership aims for “constructive” dialogue

---

  - 10** Sectarian tensions and bloodshed grows in Iraq

---

  - 12** Syrian chemical weapons are to be eradicated

---

  - 14** Newest wave of Moro insurgency causes crisis

---

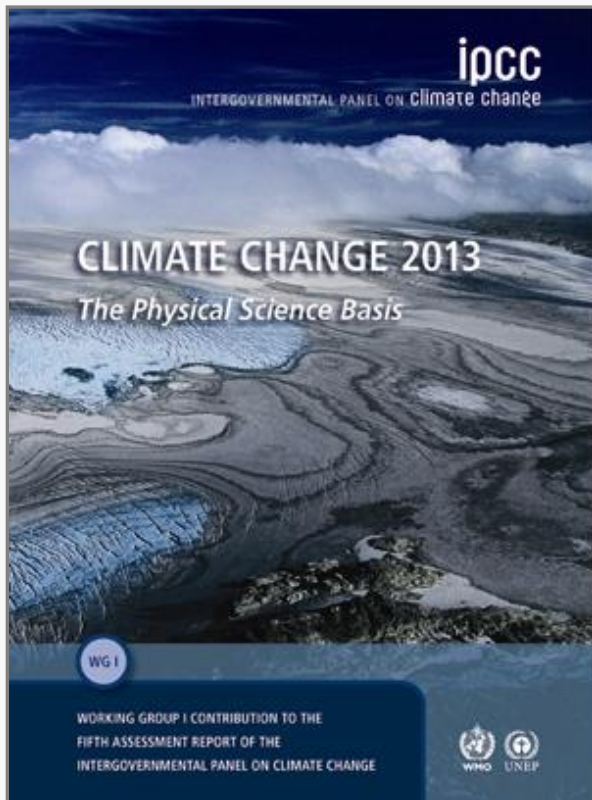
  - 16** Shopping mall in Nairobi attacked by Somali terrorists

---

  - 18** News in Brief

## UN warns over climate change

**The new report** of UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was released on 27 September, drawing attention to the main processes of environmental changes in the last decades. Experts and scientist were working on it for years and came to the final conclusions after a week of debate in Stockholm.



Summarizing the main concerns of the issue Qin Dahe, member of the IPCC working group declared: “our assessment of the science finds that the atmosphere and ocean have warmed, the amount of snow and ice has diminished, the global mean sea level has risen and that concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased”.

The problem of climate change has never been an easy topic to discuss, mainly because it has not been proven yet whether the global warming is caused by the humanity or it is just a natural process that cannot be influenced by any human activity. Now scientists agreed that it is a 95 percent consequence of the damages that are caused by the humanity and especially by the industry. This rate was 50 percent about sixty years ago.

The most disputed part of the debate was that after 1988 the global warming stopped – while heavy industry was growing all over the world. Now, after the IPCC meeting this phenomenon is described as an interim period. But even if it is true and we consider it a completed process, it is still really hard to make predictions based on a few years of climate observation.



The issue examines different aspects and gives some possible results for the future. It also predicts the temperature increases-giving a minimum and a maximum version of it. According to the maximum version, the temperature in the Antarctic can reach the average of 11 Celsius degrees by 2100. The numbers were calculated on the potential increase of gas emission in the next few decades.

There seem to be to doubts in the question that in the end of the 21st century the average Earth surface temperature will be 1.5 Celsius degrees, which – considering the territory covered with ice – is a huge number.



**United Nations**  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change

Scientists say that the sea level increase is one of the most important consequences of the global warming. Until 2100 it is predicted to be at least 26 cm in average but it can reach even 82 cm – that can lead to the flood of countries below the



sea level. As experts said, to stop this process a “substantial and sustained reduction of greenhouse gas emissions” is required. They also noted that this change is almost absolutely up to the humanity and to the willingness of living in a more sustainable way.

It was the fifth publication of IPCC on his topic, being one of the most successful ones. In the next twelve months two more IPCC reports are expected to be released as a part of the trilogy that tries to give a better understanding on the global warming's mechanism and creates a realistic description about the current condition of these processes.

“scientists agreed that it is a 95 percent consequence of the damages that are caused by the humanity”



### **China fighting with air pollution**

China set as a goal to radically cut the primary energy use of the country. She aims to reduce it to 65 percent by 2017 by finding new forms of energy instead of coal. Currently it provides nearly 75 percent of China's energy needs, causing serious health problems for the residents. Only in the last decade the number of lung cancer patients among Beijing's residents raised by more than 50 percent, making air pollution a main concern even in health care.

### **Japan became nuclear-free**

Japan closed its last operating nuclear reactor on 16 September, making the country totally nuclear-free. This step did not have any political or economic reason, neither had the support of the biggest part of the government. But after the events of the last century and the Hiroshima disaster in 2011 the nuclear power lost its reliability among the Japanese population. After the closure huge concerns were expressed in and outside of the country that without nuclear power it is impossible to satisfy the economy's and all the citizens' energy needs.

### **Russian authorities arrested Greenpeace activists**

After atrocities between Greenpeace activists and Russian authorities the events are starting to take a dramatic turn. The environmentalists protested against Moscow's oil drill in the Arctic waters, but the events did not go the way they expected – Russia declared their action to be aggressive and provocative. After this they invaded the protesters' boat, the Arctic Sunrise and arrested the members of the crew. 11 different nationalities are under arrest now. The Greenpeace is claiming the release of its activists saying that they have got the right to protest peacefully, but no agreement has been reached yet.





## 400 kilometre-long human chain for the Catalanian independence

**Supporters of Catalonia's** independence formed a 400 kilometres long human chain across the region on 11 September. The aim was to achieve an agreement that guarantees a referendum for independence in 2014. They want to break away and form their own country as soon as possible and knowing that this problem cannot be solved within the country they wanted to draw international attention to their movement.

The speciality of the event was that the supporters came from various regions – not just from Catalonia, but even from Madrid. The number of participants was hundreds of thousands. The line literally went through the whole region; it stretched from the French border to Valencia region across the streets of Barcelona.

The fight has been going on for centuries as the minorities live in quite a well-defined territory. Catalonia already has autonomy within Spain and is a strong economy-compared to the country it belongs to. In spite of the autonomy the crisis also hit this region and this is why in the last few months and years the tensions between Spain and Catalonia have been getting more significant. Some say that without getting the independence Catalonia will get into such economic situation as Spain.

The official standpoint of the Spanish government is the total refusal saying that they do not want to separate a country

that has been united for so many centuries. On the other hand the referendum would be against the constitution, providing only the choice of refusal for the national courts. The event took place on the national day of Catalonia and according to the organisers more than half million people participated in it. The demonstration was really peaceful, at the end of the event everybody went home without any significant atrocity.

In spite of the success and the huge number of participants no result has been reached yet. But it can be a start of a process as now the leaders see how big support is from the society behind the independence movements and it is time for the government to solve the problem of 7.5 million people.



Deputies of CiU.

Photo: Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya [Flickr]



## German federal election: Angela Merkel wins again

**German Chancellor** Angela Merkel has clearly won Germany's federal elections with her Conservative Party, almost receiving an absolute majority of votes. This means she was re-elected for the historic third term. She therefore might be rightly called by many the most powerful woman in the world policy. According to relevant political analysts, Angela Merkel's re-election even for the third time means, that she managed to lead the country very successfully during turbulent economic times and euro zone crisis. German people would like Merkel to remain their chancellor, that will from the foreign policy perspective probably mean German greater austere approach towards the EU policy. The turnout of elections, which is traditionally high in Germany, but has had a decreasing tendency during last years, was projected at about 72%, that was higher than in 2009. As it was predicted by many political experts, laymen and voters, the CSU/CDU conservative bloc has won the elections with a percentage over 40, precisely 41.5%. Merkel could not hide her delight and satisfaction shortly after declaration of electoral results at the press conference. However, she refused to speak



*Angela Merkel in 2013. Photo: UKOM (Nebojša Tejić/STA)*

about her subsequent steps regarding government formation. Final results of the rest of political parties were more or less expected, as well, although they may not have delighted some of their political leaders. Especially disappointing results





were reached by the Free Democrats (FDP), with the percentage of only 4.8%. That means that for the first time in Germany's post-war history liberals did not reach required 5% to get into parliament. The FDP chairman Philipp Roesler therefore considered the result as a disaster and saddest moment for the junior coalition party. They were beaten by the Green Party – 8.4% and the Left Party – 8.6%. Liberals were almost left behind even by the eurosceptic Alternative für Deutschland party. During electioneering there were presumptions about the probable acquirement of an absolute majority of electoral votes by Conservatives. However, the result showed the opposite and the leading party is now forced to form a coalition. Angela Merkel said in preliminary talks she would be ready to create a grand coalition with SPD as it was in term from



*Election night at ZDF television studio.  
Photo: Olaf Kosinsky [Wikipedia]*

2005 to 2009. The SPD obtained 26% of electoral votes, which was indeed not a satisfactory final result for the leader of Social Democrats Peer Steinbrueck. He admitted, that he would rather not go into a grand coalition with Christian Democrats as it was before, but concluded that Merkel has a mandate for the final decision.

“Angela Merkel managed to lead the country very successfully during turbulent economic times”



## New Iranian leadership aims for “constructive” dialogue with the West

**Since the surprise election** of new Iranian President Hassan Rouhani this June, officials from both Iran and the United States have made numerous hints that they are open to direct talks to seek an end to their nuclear dispute that has been going on for decades.



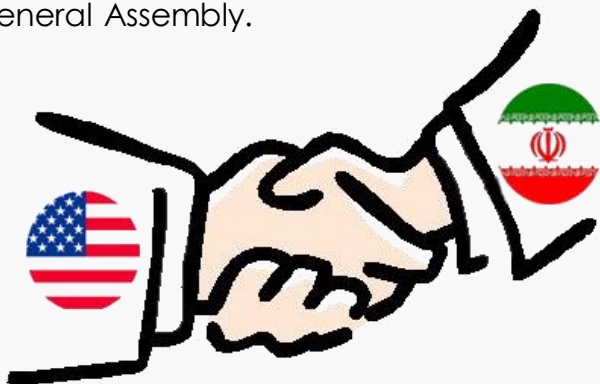
*Hassan Rouhani was born in 1948. He has been representative of the Supreme Leader to the Supreme National Security Council, (since 1989), Member of the Expediency Discernment Council (since 1991), Member of the Assembly of Experts (since 1998), President of the Center for Strategic Research (since 1992), Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (1989-2005), National Security Advisor to the President (for 13 years), Iran's top nuclear negotiator (2003-2005), Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Iran (1992-2000) and Member of Parliament of Iran (1980-2000). Photo: Mojtaba Salimi [Wikimedia Commons]*

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were cut in in 1980, after extremist students and Islamic militants infiltrated the Iranian US Embassy and took American diplomats hostage. Ever since, backed by Israel, the main ally of the US is the Middle East, The United States and Europe have continually imposed sanctions on Iran's economy, highlightedly its vital oil sector, over concerns it is working towards nuclear weapons capability. Tehran, on the other hand, has denied the allegations and says that the nuclear issue is purposely used as an excuse to punish a country unpopular in the West.

Iranian leaders have repeatedly threatened and harassed several nations, which did anything but help resolve the relations between Iran and the West. Rouhani's most recent predecessor, Holocaust-denying Mahmoud Ahmadinejad did not help the cause either. With centrist Rouhani on power, however, it seems that constructive talks might begin to ease the decade-long tensions.



Early in September, the administration of both US President Barack Obama and his Iranian counterpart confirmed that the two politicians had exchanged letters with one another. The first significant step of Iran's new diplomatic approach came on 18th September when Iranian authorities unexpectedly freed 11 of Iran's most prominent political prisoners. Analysts considered this move as a goodwill gesture on Rouhani's part on the eve of his visit to New York, where he were to attend the annual session of the United Nations General Assembly.



The next episode of Rouhani's diplomatic offensive came two days later, on 20th September, when an op-ed of the Iranian president was published on Washington Post's website. The politician expressed that failing to talk about and face contentious issues including his nation's nuclear program "leads to everyone's loss." He stated that "we must work together to end the unhealthy rivalries and interferences that fuel violence and drive us apart", representing his intention to end his nation's decade-long conflict with the US. "Rather

than focusing on how to prevent things from getting worse, we need to think – and talk – about how to make things better," he added. Concerning Iran's nuclear program, he said that it was completely peaceful, and that his country needs it not only to address its energy needs but also to establish its place in the world.



*Mohammad-Javad Zarif, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Photo: Max Talbot-Minkin [Flickr]*

On 26th September in New York, US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif shook hands and sat next to each other at a meeting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (plus Germany).



In the meantime, at a separate forum across the city, Rouhani said that his government was ready to work together with the West “with a view to ensuring full transparency under international law surrounding our nuclear program.” A day after, Obama and Rouhani had a phone conversation, marking the first time leaders of the US and Iran have directly communicated since 1979. “I believe we have got a responsibility to pursue

diplomacy and that we have a unique opportunity to make progress with the new leadership in Tehran” – Obama said during his press conference following the phone call.

Although international actors still await more detailed proposals from Iran, it seems that the current leadership of the country is genuine about its efforts towards cooperation.

#### **Foreign Minister Zarif stresses Iran does not deny Holocaust**

On Wednesday 4th September, the Jewish New Year, President Rouhani tweeted in English: “I wish all Jews, especially Iranian Jews, a blessed Rosh Hashanah.” A day later, Zarif tweeted a similar message, also using the Hebrew name of the holiday.

“The New Year would be even sweeter if you would end Iran’s Holocaust denial, sir,” – replied Christine Pelosi, daughter of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. In his retweet, Zarif said “Iran never denied it. The man who was perceived to be denying it is now gone. Happy New Year,” – distancing the new government from much-criticised former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

“Iran and the United States have made numerous hints that they are open to direct talks to seek an end to their nuclear dispute”





## Sectarian tensions and bloodshed grows in Iraq

**Numerous violent attacks** engulfed more regions in Iraq and left behind thousands of dead people during last few months. According to the United Nations, more than 4,000 Iraqi people have been killed and thousands more seriously injured in violent attacks since April. The most turbulent month was August, when almost 800 Iraqis were killed by insurgents. The turmoil raises legitimate concerns that the increasing number of attacks in Iraq may lead to country's return to sectarian bloodshed that in recent times almost led to a civil war.



The horrifying numbers suggest Iraq is facing the bloodiest wave of attacks since the Iraqi civil clashes that peaked in 2006–2007 after the US-led invasion in 2003 with the aim to topple Saddam Hussein. At that time, the Sahwa-Sunni militia opposed to

al-Qaeda-supported US troops and helped them to fight against al-Qaida. However, the Shiite-led government refused to reward Sahwa militants that caused an immense reluctance among Sunnis.

The grave situation in the Middle Eastern country stroke again after sectarian tensions between Iraqi's Sunni and Shiite Muslims have been brought to the boil from neighbouring civil war-torn Syria. The civil clash in Syria inflamed passions and disrupted the balance between sects as they are supporting the opposite sides in the conflict. The Shiite support the government and Sunni insurgents seek to oust Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The vast majority of attacks in Iraq are carried out by Sunni insurgents who blame Shiites from being traitors. The Sunni insurgency in Iraq started in December last year and situation worsened in April after state army aggressively attacked protesters against senior Sunni politician's arrest by Shiite Prime Minister. Based on relevant security resources, al-Qaeda aims to aggravate the situation with increased attacks against both Sunnis and Shiites in order to provoke people to respond. The terrorist group has claimed responsibility for extensive attacks including violent bombings particularly in Shiite regions. It permanently attacks Shiite





people, security forces and those seen to be closely linked with the Shiite government.

That was also the case of Wisam al-Hardan, recently appointed by the Prime Minister to become the head of Sahwa. Sahwa leader suffered the armed assault when three suicide bombers wanted to blow up his residence. The assault managed to kill seven people, the most of which were members of his personal security, however the Sunni militia leader was not hurt. Consequently al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for this failed attempt of assassination. The majority of people found death in car bomb attacks, which killed altogether approximately 54 people in Shiite city parts of Baghdad. The worst massacre caused by the car explosion happened in Sadr, where seven people, including two soldiers, were blown up in a bomb blast.

However, not only Shiite civilians are being attacked. People in the Sunni Latifiya region suffered from a roadside bomb attack that killed five people. Another six Sunni people were assassinated by militants in Yousufiya while the family was preparing



the burial. Subsequently, in the Diyala province, five Shiite people were killed by a car bomb situated in a marketplace. There have also been several attacks on Sunni as well as Shiite mosques. At the beginning of September, a Sunni mosque in the Umm al-Adham village near Baqouba was violently attacked. The slaughter caused by a bomb installed inside an air conditioner left 33 worshippers dead, while 45 others were wounded.

Iraqi government has attempted to stop the insurgencies by carrying out various crackdowns against aggressive militants, but until now it has not managed to moderate the savage situation.

“Iraq is facing the bloodiest wave of attacks since the Iraqi civil clashes that peaked in 2006–2007”



## Syrian chemical weapons are to be eradicated

**Syria has agreed** to join the Chemical Weapons Convention on 12th September. The Convention outlaws the production, use and transfer of such deadly weapons. After a Russian proposal, the Assad government decided to reveal the location of its chemical arsenal, and let the United Nations decide its further fate.

The tension between the United States and Syria escalated quickly after the US had claimed it had proof that the Syrian government used sarin gas during the attack in the Ghouta area of the capital, Damascus, on 21st August. Following the attack, which US reports say to have caused the death of no less than 1,400 people, US President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry, backed by French and British voices, spoke of the need of immediate armed retaliation against Syria. The Syrian government, backed by Russia, denied US allegations, blaming the rebels for the use of chemical substances on the day of the attack.

After UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned the US not to proceed with its intervention plans unilaterally, and also considering three previous Russian and Chinese vetoes in the Security Council to

block resolutions condemning Assad's government and using sanctions against it, the US seemed to be forced to back down with its plans of armed retaliation against the Assad regime.

On 16th September, the UN, careful not to blame either side, confirmed that some rockets were loaded with the nerve agent sarin, adding that it is possible that the evidence could have been tempered with in the rebel-controlled stricken neighbourhoods. "This is a war crime," Ban Ki-moon told the Security Council when he presented the report. "The results are overwhelming and indisputable. The facts speak for themselves."



*Chemical weapon used in the 2013 Ghouta attack. Photo: Brown Moses (Eliot Higgins)*

Based on the report, the US, Britain and France immediately declared that Assad's government should be held responsible. "It



defies logic that the opposition would have infiltrated the regime-controlled area to fire on opposition-controlled areas," US Ambassador Samantha Power said. "Only the regime could have carried out this large-scale attack." Russia, Syria's closest ally recommended not to jump to early conclusions, saying that the Syrian government's claim about the opposition being the guilty party for the use of sarin gas "cannot be simply shrugged off."

In spite of there being a deep division between the rebel-supporting US, and the Assad-backing Russia, both sides have agreed that the disarmament of chemical weapons in Syria would be a significant step towards peace. The two countries therefore reached an agreement to eradicate Syria's chemical weapons by mid-2014. Short of options, Syria promised to implement the US-Russian chemical



*Damascus at Dusk.*  
Photo: upyemoz [flickr]

weapons deal once it gained UN approval. Even though the recent agreement is definitely not going to put an end to the Syrian conflict itself, which began two and a half years ago, it is a good sign to see that the Assad government is committed to cooperate with UN decisions and that the country does not ignore international influence.

### **Draft UN resolution on Syria's chemical weapons**

On 26th September, the joint US-Russian plan to eradicate the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal got UN approval in the form of a draft UN Security Council resolution. The UN "encourages Member States to provide support, including personnel, technical expertise, information, equipment, and financial and other resources and assistance" during the process. The resolution highlights that "the Syrian Arab Republic shall comply with all aspects" of the resolution.

“likewise in the overthrow of 2011, the military experienced some influence on political questions and decisions”



## Newest wave of Moro insurgency causes crisis

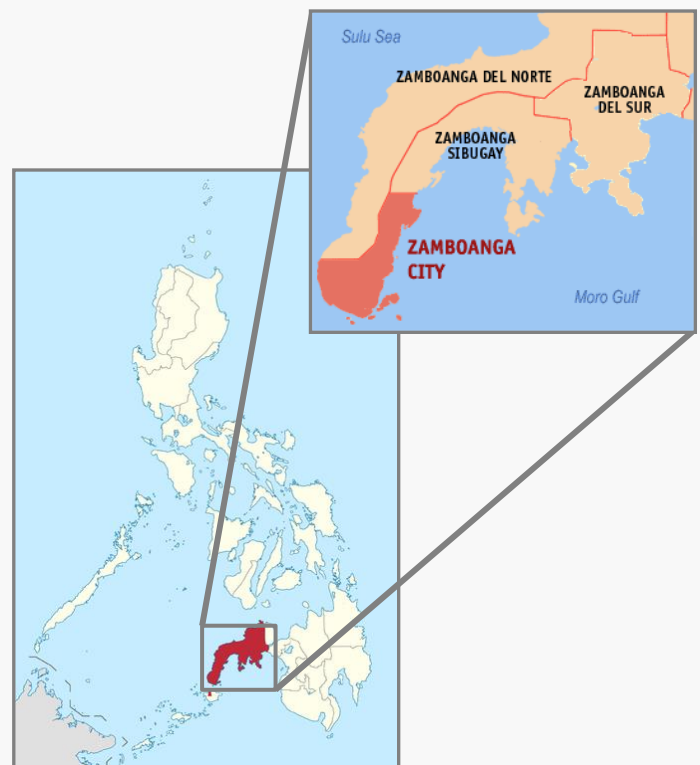
**On 9th September** in Zamboanga City, Philippines, armed militants of the Moro National Liberation Front entered the city and killed four people, giving a start to what resulted in a three week long standoff on the streets Zamboanga.

The relationship between the Philippine government and the rebel group MNLF has been more or less quiet since the 1996 peace treaty that allowed the creation of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. Nur Misuari, the leader of the group, however, has recently got the impression that the peace deal and the MNLF itself were in danger, therefore on 12th August 2013, he arbitrarily declared the independence of the Bangsamoro Republik, claiming the islands of Mindanao, Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Palawan.

After that, Misuari disappeared from the public view, and has sat quietly in the back right until the fighting broke out in Zamboanga. Reportedly led by Ustadz Habier Malik, the several hundred MNLF soldiers that suddenly set foot in the city took hostages and retreated to surrounding coastal barangays (villages). By mid-day, the Islamic insurgents were reported to be holding over 200 civilians' hostage, willing to use them as human shields if a fight

broke out with the Philippine army. On the following day, the joint Philippine armed forces surrounded the endangered area and blockaded the ports of the city, preventing further MNLF forces from joining their brothers-in-arms.

Initially, in the first days, there were diplomatic attempts to solve the standoff peacefully. After the police and the government both failed to establish a ceasefire with the rebels, the government



Location of Zamboanga City in the Philippines





selected to proceed with its air strikes and rocket attacks against alleged MNLF positions in the city.

An estimated sum of 500 rebel militants was facing more than 5,000 soldiers of the Philippine government, yet they managed to hold out for more than two weeks. Day by day, however, the army gradually regained control over the territory that had been occupied by the Islamic militants. By 25th September, the fighting had already displaced 109,000 people in Zamboanga City and 19,000 in Basilan, and destroyed more than 10,000 homes – thereupon the UN declared the situation a humanitarian crisis.

On 29th September, National Defence Secretary Voltaire Gazmin informed the Philippine community in a statement, announcing that the conflict in Zamboanga was over. “So far, the security crisis is over and now we go to post-conflict phase” – he said.

Based on the reports, the conflict resulted in the death of over 180 rebels, 25 army soldiers and at least 12 civilians, and left nearly 260 people wounded. Although Malik, the leader of the attack, managed



to escape, the Philippine security forces managed to capture almost 300 rebel militants.

Whereas President Benigno S. Aquino said during the crisis that he maintains his willingness to discuss the peace deal with the MNLF, the government has received a harsh reminder that the quest for peace with the Jihadists remains as difficult as ever.

“the conflict resulted in the death of over 180 rebels, 25 army soldiers and at least 12 civilians”





## Shopping mall in Nairobi attacked by Somali terrorists



*Smoke above Westgate Mall on 23 September. Photo: Anne Knight*

**On the International Day of Peace** – 21st September – the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi, Kenya was stormed by as few as four masked assailants wearing combat uniforms and carrying assault rifles. The terrorists first exploded some grenades inside the mall then opened fire on security guards and shoppers. The attack lasted for until 3 days later, and resulted in the death of at least 72 deaths, including 61 civilians, 6 Kenyan soldiers, and all 4 terrorists.

The Somalia-based Islamist group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for what happened in the mall, saying that the incident was an act of retribution for the Kenyan military's deployment in Somalia. Other experts suspect that by launching the 21st September attack, the group also took revenge for Linda Nchi, a coordinated

military operation in southern Somalia in October 2011 that aimed to take down al-Shabaab militants by the Somali and Kenyan military.

As the police arrived to the site, they locked down the shopping centre from the outside and warned residents to stay away from the area. In their attempt to enter the mall in order to rescue those who got trapped inside, they engaged in gunfire with the terrorists which resulted in a stand-off. Dozens of people escaped through a back entrance, which was captured by the Kenyan national TV.

During the night, Kenyan forces with the army's leadership searched through all floors of the mall. They encouraged shocked and wounded people to trickle out from their hiding places, so they could be taken care of by the ambulance. The joint military, police and security forces reported that they managed to corner the assailants, who were still holding hostages.

During the next 24 hours, hundreds of shoppers that had been hiding elsewhere were rescued. Reports told that many of them were heavily dehydrated and in a state of shock. There were several exchanges of fire between the terrorists and the Kenyan forces, resulting in casualties on both sides.



On 24th September, before noon, it was reported that the gunmen had released all hostages, and that the security forces, now including US and British agents, were about to conduct a final sweep of the building. By sunset, the assault was declared to have come to an end.

Initial reports spoke of between 10 and 15 terrorists, although officials later confirmed that the attack was executed by only four terrorists. The fact that such a small group managed to carry out such a deadly assault and hold off hundreds of soldiers for almost four days left many Kenyans wondering about the amount of damage a larger group of militants could have caused.

The 21st September attack is considered to be one of the worst acts of terrorism on



*Crowd fleeing sounds of gunfire near Westgate Mall on 23 September.  
Photo: Anne Knight*

Kenyan soil since the 1998 bombing of the US embassy. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said on national television that Kenya had “overcome terrorist attacks before” and vowed to “hunt down the perpetrators wherever they run.”

### **Secret security pact between Kenya and Israel?**

Multiple on-site sources reported that Israeli anti-terror forces entered the mall during the second night of the attack and that Israeli advisers were helping with negotiating strategy to end the siege. The International Business Times directly stated that Kenya and Israel had a secret security pact. The Foreign Ministry of Israel neither confirmed nor denied the presence of its forces during the Westgate operation.

“the attack resulted in the death of at least 72, including 61 civilians”



## ■ News in Brief

# Domestic affairs affecting international relations

### New clashes erupt in Turkey

■ Riots have broken out all over Turkey after the death of Ahmet Atakan, a 22-year-old student who had been killed during an anti-government protest. Atakan was allegedly struck by a tear gas canister causing him fatal head wounds. Police however have denied

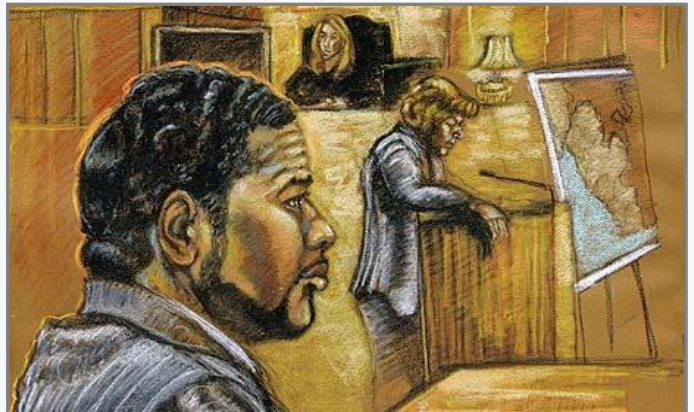


Photo: Mstyslav Chernov [mstyslav-chemov.com]

these reports from the beginning, emphasizing that law enforcement agencies were not involved in the death of the young activist who – contrary to rumours – fell from a building. Anyway, the incident made him the sixth so-called “chapuller” killed in Turkey since mass rallies have begun. Recent protests took place in Turkey’s southern province Hatay, in central Istanbul and in the capital, Ankara with water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets used to disperse the crowd.

### Former Liberian president sentenced to 50-year prison

■ Charles Taylor, Liberia’s former president is likely to be sent to a high-security British jail to spend there the rest of his life after his appeal against his conviction for war crimes has been rejected point by point. According to Judge George King, Taylor fuelled a conflict that became “a threat to international peace and security” which fact legitimates the judgment in 2012. Taylor was found guilty in 11 crimes including terrorism, murder, rape and supplying weapons to the Revolutionary United Front rebels in exchange for a constant flow of the so-called blood diamonds. He was the first former head of state convicted by an international court on war crimes since World War II. The judgment was widely welcomed in Sierra Leone, however the reception in Liberia – for obvious reasons – was far more critical.





### **Egyptian interior minister targeted by bomb attack**

■ Mohammed Ibrahim, Egyptian interior minister has survived a car bomb attack while he was travelling through the Nasr City district in Cairo. Egyptian authorities are not yet sure whether the explosion was caused by a suicide bombing or an explosives-laden car detonated by remote control. "It destroyed four of the vehicles of my protection team, with many shops in the area badly affected, along with a vehicle of civilians and a small child who had a leg amputated" said the minister who called the incident "a cowardly assassination bid". 10 policemen and 11 civilians have been wounded in total. Mohammed Ibrahim is in charge of Egypt's police force which has carried out a serious crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood's protests in recent weeks, the organisation from which ousted President Mohamed Morsi hails. The Muslim Brotherhood however "strongly condemned" what happened.



*Egyptian interior minister Mohammed Ibrahim. Photo: VOA*

### **Co-founder of the Afghan Taliban released from jail**

■ Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, former deputy leader of the Afghan Taliban has been freed from jail in Pakistan. The recently released prisoner was arrested in a CIA-Pakistani joint operation in 2010, in Karachi. The decision can be considered as an effort "to further facilitate the Afghan reconciliation process" said Pakistan's foreign ministry, since Afghanistan has long



demanding the release of Abdul Ghani Baradar. Mohammad Ismail Qasim, member of the council in charge of negotiating with the Taliban has also confirmed that the Afghan government is "very much hopeful that Abdul Ghani Baradar can play an important role in the peace process". Others, however, highlight the fact that Pakistan has released more than 30 Taliban prisoners over the last year in order to support peace talks between insurgents and Kabul, however some of them almost immediately returned to the fight against the Afghan government. US politicians also share this fear believing that Abdul Ghani Baradar would return to the battlefield.



## New clashes in the Central African Republic

■ In the Central African Republic tensions do not seem to get lower. Although in March 2013 rebel forces ousted President François Bozizé Yangouvonda, he still has supporters all across the country. Loyal forces have even seized the town of Bouca which is located not far from



*François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic.  
Photo: UNDP/hdptcar*

the capital, Bangui. On 9 September – as a part of their first large-scale operation since the ouster – they clashed with former rebels. More than 60 people got killed in the attack. According to some opinions the destruction can cause insecurity in the whole region. The state gained its independence from France in 1960 and in spite of being a relatively rich country in mineral resources, the economic and political situation is still unstable. Moreover, UN reports show that 1.2 million inhabitants are in need of food, shelter, healthcare and water.

## More al-Qaeda activities in Yemen

■ Yemeni military official claims that coordinated attacks in a southern province committed by al-Qaeda have killed at least 38 soldiers and wounded dozens. Yemeni authorities are at war with al-Qaeda's local branch, the al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) which has begun calling itself as Ansar al-Sharia. The organisation is considered by the United States to be one of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups.



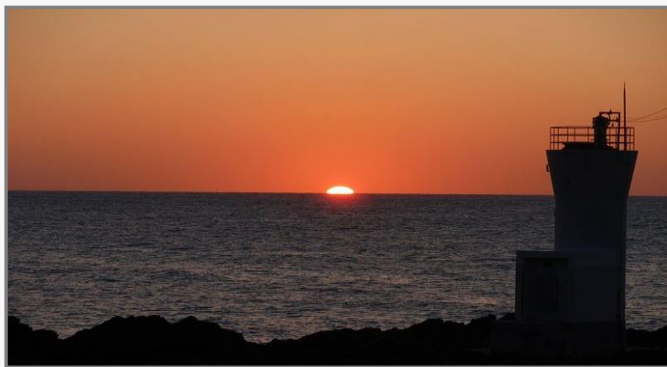


## ■ News in Brief

# Bilateral relations

### **New-old tensions: Chinese ships around the disputed Senkaku Islands**

■ According to the Japan Coast Guard's report, four Chinese vessels have entered territorial waters near the disputed Senkaku Islands. Japanese authorities have sent



repeated warnings to them, however only one responded by saying in both Chinese and Japanese that the islands are "China's inherent territory since ancient times". It was the 68th incident since the Japanese government purchased a major part of the islands from a private owner in September 2012 and so far, there is still no sign of compromise seen between Asia's two largest powers.

### **Almost eighty Christian killed in Pakistani suicide attack**

■ On September 22 almost 80 people were killed and almost 120 were wounded in a twin-suicide bombing in Pakistan. The attack aimed to kill thousands of worshippers leaving the Protestant All Saints Church of Pakistan after Sunday including choir members and children as well. After the bombing, militants linked to Pakistani Taliban said that they were responsible for the attack. Later, relatives of the victims protested in front of the church claiming the government to prevent such events.

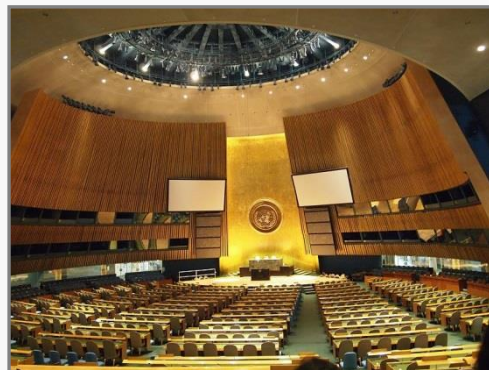


## ■ News in Brief

# International relations

### UN General Assembly's 68th session opens

■ The United Nations General Assembly opened its 68th session in New York with the speech of its current President, John William Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda). As regards the post 2015 development agenda, he has emphasized the importance of dealing with the role of women, the situation of young and civil society and – in connection with these – the promotion of human rights and cooperation among developing countries. As he said: “We simply cannot reach our development goals or advance human wellbeing without addressing the needs and challenges of women and young while also making use of the contributions of both. And, as we remind ourselves, at the recent Rio+20 conference, governments cannot do it alone in the implementation of any development agenda.” President Ashe has also called on the diplomats to explore where and how the United Nations can engage with the civil society to promote the development agenda. The session was attended by more than 130 heads of state or government and around 60 foreign ministers.



### Al-Qaeda leader calls for attack on US

■ Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri has urged Muslims to wage attacks inside the United States which would wreak instability and “bleed America economically”. In his audio message released online after the 12th anniversary of the 9/11 strikes, al-Zawahri has emphasized that the US is not a “mythic power” and it could be defeated even through small attacks by “one brother or a few of the brothers”. “The weak point of America is its economy, which has already begun to stagger due to the military and security expenditure” – he said. Al-Zawahri also urged the Islam world to replace the dollar with currency of other countries that are not taking part in the aggression against the Muslims. He thinks that at the same time, the Islam world should land a strike on the United States by refusing to buy goods from America and its allies.





Institute for Cultural Relations Policy



<http://culturalrelations.org>