

Recap of Middle East, North Africa crises

AFP, Dubai

Developments in the unrest sweeping some other countries:

ALGERIA: About 200 protesters braved riot police to rally in a central square in Algiers as security forces clamped down on the capital.

IRAQ: Around 2,000 university students demonstrated in north Iraq, demanding an apology from regional president Massud Barzani after protests earlier in the week left two dead.

DJIBOUTI: Fresh clashes between opposition supporters and police, a day after an unprecedented anti-regime protest ended in violence.

SAUDI: Human Rights Watch called on Saudi Arabia to free five activists who announced amid the turmoil shaking the Middle East that they were forming the kingdom's first political party.

EGYPT: The army announced that it would not punish an officer who was shown on television joining anti-regime demonstrators after surrendering his weapon.

IRAN: Tehran warned of a crackdown if opposition supporters stage new rallies which they have called to mourn the deaths of two victims of recent unrest and to show support to their leaders.

JORDAN: A mob wielding batons waded into an anti-regime protest in Amman on Friday, injuring eight people in the first such violence since protests began.

KUWAIT: At least five people, including a security man, hurt and dozens arrested on Friday as Kuwaiti riot police clashed with hundreds of stateless Arab protesters demanding rights.

SYRIA: Hundreds of Syrians staged an impromptu protest against security forces after traffic police beat a young man in the capital's Old City.

TUNISIA: Tunisia's caretaker government granted amnesty to political prisoners and new aid to the poor on Friday as it moved to counter simmering discontent a month after the ouster of its strong-man president.



A Yemeni demonstrator holds a picture depicting Saudi King Abdullah, top, and, left to right, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh, Algerian President Abdelaziz, Libyan leader Kadhafi, Moroccan King Mohammed VI, Jordan's King Abdullah II and ousted presidents Mubarak of Egypt and Ben Ali of Tunisia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'REVOLUTION DOES NOT LET UP'



PHOTO: AFP

A woman holds a sign that reads in Arabic, "Revolution does not let up --Yemen, Libya and Bahrain", as she protests outside the offices in Beirut representing the Bahraini Embassy in Lebanon, yesterday.

Protesters retake Bahrain square

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Thousands of anti-government protesters have reoccupied their former stronghold in the capital, Manama, after troops and riot police retreated from the Pearl roundabout in the centre of the city.

The cheering protesters carrying Bahraini flags, flowers and signs that said "Peaceful, peaceful" marched to the square yesterday. They chanted, "We are victorious".

Protesters kissed the ground in joy and took pictures of about 60 police vehicles leaving the area.

Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, the crown prince, had earlier in the day ordered the military to withdraw, saying that the police would now be responsible for enforcing order, the Bahrain News Agency reported.

Soon after the crown prince's directive,

protesters had attempted to stream back to the roundabout, but were beaten back by the police. According to the Reuters news agency, about 80 prisoners were taken to a hospital after being hit by rubber bullets or teargas.

The protesters, however, were successful in the next attempt, when the riot police withdrew from the traffic circle as well.

The tiny kingdom with a Sunni monarchy has been in upheaval with the Shia majority taking to the streets in thousands.

The authorities had cracked down on the protesters with a heavy hand, resulting in the deaths of several protesters in police firing. But the protesters, who accuse the ruling Sunni elite of discriminating against them, have stood their ground.

Meanwhile, the General Union of Bahraini Workers has called a strike for Sunday, according to a member of the workers union at national flag carrier Gulf Air.

Libya protest deaths 'rise to 84'

BBC ONLINE

The number of people killed in three days of protests in Libya has risen to 84, according to the New York-based group Human Rights Watch.

The main focus of the demonstrations against Col Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year-old rule has been the second city, Benghazi, where one hospital reported 35 deaths on Friday.

Protests are said to be continuing. State media have warned of retaliation.

Websites have been blocked and electricity shut off in some areas.

Media restrictions make it difficult to verify reports independently but the BBC has confirmed that websites including Facebook and al-Jazeera Arabic were blocked.

Security forces opened fire in Benghazi on Friday when protesters approached a compound used by Col Gaddafi when he visits the city, which is about 1,000 km (600 miles) from the capital Tripoli, eyewitnesses say.

The city's al-Jala hospital received the bodies of 35 people killed in the shooting, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW) and media reports.

In a statement on its website, HRW says there were demonstrations in at least four other eastern cities on Friday - al-Bayda, Ajdabiya, Zawiya, and Darnah - after security forces shot dead a number of protesters in the previous days.

Fewer big fish in the sea

AFP, Washington

Fewer big, predatory fish are swimming in the world's oceans because of overfishing by humans, leaving smaller fish to thrive and double in force over the past 100 years, scientists said Friday.

Big fish such as cod, tuna, and groupers have declined worldwide by two-thirds while the number of anchovies, sardines and capelin has surged in their absence, said University of British Columbia researchers.

The researchers also found that more than half of the decline in the predatory fish population has taken place over the last 40 years.

Somali pirates hijack US yacht

AFP, Nairobi

Somali pirates on Friday hijacked a yacht with four Americans on board in the Indian Ocean, a non-governmental organisation monitoring regional maritime activity said.

Ecoterra International said the S/V Quest was seized in the afternoon 240 nautical miles (275 miles) off the coast of Oman.

"S/V Quest was attacked by pirates in the Indian Ocean and the four Americans on board are being held hostage," it said.

'Aeroecology' uses radar to track flying animals

BBC ONLINE

The study of birds, bats and flying insects could be transformed by the use of technology designed for tracking storms, researchers say.

Meteorologists once treated the signals from flying animals as a nuisance that complicated their measurements.

But recent improvements in computing power and networking of radar stations have turned that nuisance signal into a valuable data source on animal ecology.

A panel told the AAAS conference

that radar could spot a single bee at 50km.

Further improvements to the technique must be made before that level of resolution can be reached, however; now it is the storms that are complicating the signals that interest biologists.

But pioneer of the "aeroecology" field, Thomas Kunz, of Boston University, told the conference why radar is needed.

"One of the limitations we have in working with small animals like birds and bats and insects is that you can't put large satellite radio trans-

mitters on them to understand their movements.

"So the whole concept of aeroecology is an integrated approach using many different tools to try to answer the questions about how organisms move and use the atmosphere."

"We already have well-developed networks of radar around the country and around the world - used for tracking weather and for tracking airplanes," said Phillip Chilson, a meteorologist from the University of Oklahoma.

ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS
US vetoes UNSC resolution

BBC ONLINE

The US has vetoed an Arab resolution at the UN Security Council condemning Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories as an obstacle to peace.

All 14 other members of the Security Council backed the resolution, which had been endorsed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

It was the first veto exercised by the Obama administration which had promised better relations with the Muslim world.

A Palestinian official said the talks process would now be "re-assessed".

Washington was under pressure from Israel and Congress, which has a strong pro-Israel lobby, to use its veto.

The Obama administration's decision risks angering Arab peoples at a time of mass street protests in the Middle East, the BBC's Barbara Plett reports from the UN.

It had placed enormous pressure on the Palestinians to withdraw the resolution and accept alternatives, but these were ultimately rejected.



PHOTO: AFP

Protesters join forces to kill Wisconsin Gov Scott Walker's bill during a rally at the Capital Building on Friday in Madison, Wisconsin. Protests continued at the state capitol as legislation slashing collective bargaining rights for public workers stalled in the state senate due to Democrats avoiding a quorum vote on the measure.

Student killed in Yemen clashes

AFP, Sanaa

One protester was shot dead and five wounded in clashes with Yemeni government supporters near the capital Sanaa's university campus on Saturday, an AFP correspondent reported.

The death, the first in Sanaa in a week of similar clashes, came as government supporters, armed with guns, batons and rocks, tried to break into the campus and students responded by hurling stones.

The AFP reporter saw the body of the student, hit by a bullet, as the clashes raged outside the university.

Five students were also wounded, one of them seriously, according to medics.

Tribesmen and plainclothes police also attacked the students during the clashes, the AFP correspondent said, adding that police did not intervene but blocked the roads leading to the campus.

Later, supporters of President Ali Abdullah Saleh dispersed the protesters and took control of the area around the university campus and surrounding roads, the correspondent said.

On Friday, at least four anti-regime protesters were wounded by supporters of President Ali Abdullah Saleh who attacked the demonstration armed with batons and axes.

Students have tried for the past week to march on the presidential palace but have been intercepted each day by stone-throwing regime supporters.

Protests continued early Saturday in the main southern city of Aden, where fierce clashes on Friday killed four and injured 17 people, five of them soldiers, according to medics and witnesses.

Demonstrations took place in the Aden neighbourhoods of Khor Maksar, Al-Mansura, Sheikh Osman and in Dar Saed where security forces detained eight people, as well as in Mualla, the sources said.

"The ruling party are killers" and "no south, no north our revolt is for the youth," chanted the protesters.

NEWS IN brief

Being bilingual a good brain

work-out

AFP, Washington

Speaking more than one language protects the brain against cognitive decline and makes a person better at multi-tasking, researchers said Friday at a major US science conference.

Being bilingual, or even learning a second language late in life, has been shown to slow the decline of some key brain functions, said Ellen Bialystok of York University in Canada, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Long lost silent movies

return to US

AFP, Culpeper

In a cold underground bunker once packed with enough dollars to replenish the cash supply in the eastern United States in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack, "Gigi" lies silently near "An American in Paris".

In a room next door, a young woman who gave her name as Barbara works on "Little Brother". Upstairs, one of Barbara's colleagues is trying to make sense of "The Arab".

This is not a secret US interrogation site, but the state-of-the-art facility where the US Library of Congress holds and preserves the world's largest collection of films, television programs, radio broadcasts and sound recordings.

Fergie not invited to royal wedding

AFP, London

Sarah Ferguson, the former wife of Britain's Prince Andrew, will not be invited to the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in April, her spokesman told a newspaper yesterday.

"She will not be attending the wedding. She never expected to be invited or to attend. She will be overseas at the time," he told the Daily Telegraph.

However, her daughters Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, William's cousins, are expected to be among the guests at Westminster Abbey.