

# New Libya 'stained' by detainee abuse

*Says rights body; Gaddafi son captured in Sirte*

AGENCIES

Libya's new authorities must stamp out arbitrary detention and widespread abuse of detainees, particularly those who fought for Muammar Gaddafi, to avoid a "stained" rights record, Amnesty International said yesterday.

In a report published yesterday, Amnesty said it had uncovered a pattern of beatings and ill-treatment of captured Gaddafi soldiers, suspected loyalists and alleged mercenaries in western Libya after interviewing approximately 300 prisoners in August and September.

Meanwhile, the new National Transitional Council said they have arrested Mutassim Gaddafi, a son of Libya's former leader, from Sirte on Wednesday.

"Mutassim Gaddafi was captured at Sirte and was transferred to Benghazi" in the country's east, NTC advisor Abdelkarim Bizama told AFP.

Gaddafi opponents fired shots in the air in the capital Tripoli and Misrata on Wednesday evening, after news of Mutassim's arrest broke.

Mutassim Gaddafi had been considered a rival to his brother Seif al-Islam in the competition to succeed the Libyan leader.



Mutassim Gaddafi

Seif al-Islam is believed to be hiding in Bani Walid possibly with his father.

Forces of Libya's new regime said earlier Wednesday they were mopping up the last, increasingly weak and isolated pockets of resistance in Gaddafi's hometown, claiming its fall was imminent.

Amnesty said militias have detained as many as "2,500 people in Tripoli and Al-Zawiyah," the majority of them without an arrest warrant, since forces loyal to the National Transitional Council (NTC) seized the capital.

The report said detainees appear to suffer beatings and torture particularly at the start of their detention as a "welcome," and that two guards -- in separate detention facilities -- admitted to beating prisoners to extract "confessions" more quickly.

Particularly vulnerable to ill-treatment and arbitrary detentions, it said, were sub-Saharan Africans suspected of being mercenaries and black Libyans, especially from the Tawarga region, a key base for Gaddafi troops during the siege against the nearby city of Misrata.

Amnesty said children have been held together with adults, and women supervised by male guards.

## STRAUSS-KAHN CASE French inquiry dropped

BBC ONLINE

A French inquiry into attempted rape claims against ex-IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn has been dropped, reports said yesterday.

The prosecutor's office said the evidence suggested sexual assault - a less serious offence than attempted rape, with a shorter statute of limitations.

Writer Tristane Banon had accused Strauss-Kahn of attempted rape in 2003.

Her accusation emerged while Strauss-Kahn was accused of rape in New York; that case was later dropped.

Prosecutors said in a statement that "it is clear that, for lack of sufficient proof, a prosecution may not be initiated over the count of attempted rape, but facts that could be described as sexual assault have meanwhile been recognised".

## US opposes Israeli settlement move

AFP, Washington

The United States said Wednesday it opposes "any effort to legalize" settlement outposts on Palestinian land, after Israel set up a panel tasked with exploring ways to do so.

"The United States has a clear policy -- we do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity," the State Department said in answer to a question posed at Tuesday's news briefing.

"We oppose any effort to legalize settlement outposts, which is unhelpful to our peace efforts and would contradict Israeli commitments and obligations," it said in a statement.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Tuesday the establishment of a new committee charged with finding ways to legalize settlement outposts built on private Palestinian land.

The decision to set up a task force was taken after heavy pressure from the settler lobby and right-wing activists following the demolition in early September of three structures in the Migron outpost near Ramallah.

The State Department said: "We call again on both parties to take constructive actions to promote peace and avoid actions that complicate this process or undermine trust.

"We urge both parties to take advantage of the Quartet proposal and return to direct talks," it said.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas handed over a historic request to UN chief Ban Ki-moon on September 23 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly asking the United Nations to admit the state of Palestine as a full member.



## Ai Weiwei world's most powerful artist

AFP, London

Dissident Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, who hit the headlines during his 81-day detention by Chinese authorities, was yesterday named as the world's most powerful art figure by influential magazine ArtReview.

Ai, who was released in June after being imprisoned for "economic crimes", tops the London-based publication's annual "power 100 list" ahead of Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Julia Peyton-Jones, curators of London's Serpentine Gallery.

But Ai, who was released in June after being detained for more than 80 days by Chinese authorities, told the BBC he does "not feel powerful at all".

The magazine said he was chosen by the panel because of his political activism, as much as his artwork.

China criticised the selection saying it was based on "political bias".

In a statement, ArtReview magazine said: "[His] activities have allowed artists to move away from the idea that they work within a privileged zone limited by the walls of a gallery or museum."

"It's expanding the possibilities of what you can do with art, and as an artist how you can use your voice," it added.

Police accused Ai of tax evasion and the government eventually freed him due to his "good attitude" in admitting to the charges against him, his willingness to repay taxes he owes and on medical grounds. He has diabetes.

Ai, one of China's best-known artists, rose to international prominence as co-designer of Beijing's "Bird's Nest" Olympic Stadium.

# Palestinians aim to join UN bodies

REUTERS, Ramallah

The Palestinians will apply for full membership of as many United Nations agencies as possible as part of push to advance their national interests, an official said.

The plan is likely to generate more criticism from the United States, which has pledged to veto a Palestinian request last month for full membership of the United Nations, if it comes to a vote in the Security Council.

The Palestinians have been preparing their drive for membership of the UN agencies over the past two years as part of a plan to get ready for statehood, said Omar Awadallah, who heads the UN department at the foreign ministry.

"Our policy is now toward gaining membership of all international organizations, and specialized organizations of the United Nations as a full member," he told Reuters in an interview. "We are not looking for confrontation, we are looking to secure our rights," he said.

The plan advanced last week with a Palestinian application for full membership of the Paris-based UN cultural body Unesco. The organization's board decided to put the application to a vote in a general assembly meeting later this month.

Though their application for full UN membership looks set to fail due to U.S. opposition, the Palestinians can still secure full membership of some international agencies, even with their current UN status as an "observer entity."

These include Unesco, the World Health Organization (WHO), the international police agency Interpol and the International Telecommunications Union. US pressure has in the past played a major role in dissuading the Palestinians from applying for full membership of such agencies.

But their application for full UNESCO membership, like their bid to become a full member state of the United Nations, has signalled a new Palestinian readiness to ignore US objections.



REUTERS: BHUTAN

**King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Queen Jetsun Pema pose for pictures after their marriage at the Punkaha Dzong in Bhutan's ancient capital Punakha yesterday. The event captivated the whole nation that had grown impatient with their 31-year-old bachelor king's lack of urgency to start a family since his father retired and handed power to him five years ago.**

## NEWS IN brief

### 14 killed in Syrian violence

REUTERS, Beirut

Fourteen people were killed in gunfire in two Syrian towns yesterday, an activist group said, most of them in clashes between troops loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and gunmen believed to be army defectors.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said six soldiers and two army deserters were killed in fighting in the southern town of Haara, as well as one civilian.

In the northern province of Idlib, where Assad's forces have carried out raids to arrest activists, army deserters and gunmen, five civilians were killed after troops backed by armoured vehicles rolled into the town of Binish firing machine guns, the group said.

The United Nations says 2,900 people have been killed in Assad's crackdown on protests which broke out in southern province of Deraa more than six months ago and spread across the country.

### Four Occupy Wall St protesters arrested

AFP, New York

New York police arrested four people Wednesday during an Occupy Wall Street rally outside a skyscraper housing JP Morgan Chase bank.

About 100 people took part in the protest, chanting "we are 99 percent" and "tax the rich!" The protest quickly dispersed after the arrests, an AFP journalist said.

The Occupy Wall Street protest started September 17 with a camp in a small square in the New York financial district to highlight what demonstrators say is greed and corruption in the country's business

### US expelled 397,000 illegal migrants in year

AFP, Washington

US authorities deported 397,000 undocumented immigrants, of which 210,000 had criminal records in the fiscal year just concluded, the top immigration enforcer told lawmakers Wednesday.

John Morton, director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), offered the figure at a congressional hearing, which would outpace the records of 390,000 illegal and 195,000 with criminal records in the prior fiscal year.

Morton said that with "limited resources," his agency, part of the Department of Homeland Security, is focusing on "priority" cases -- including those who pose dangers to public safety or who are

## Norway killer says 80 militant cells in Europe

REUTERS, Oslo

Anders Behring Breivik, who has confessed to the bomb and shooting attacks that killed 77 people in Norway in July, says there are up to 80 cells in Europe with militant anti-Islamic ideals like his own, Norwegian investigators said yesterday.

Norwegian police said previously that Breivik had said there were two or three cells in Norway, apart from himself, and "several" elsewhere in Europe that shared his plans to stop what they saw as an Islamic invasion of Europe.

"It's more like three in Norway and 80 around Europe," police prosecutor Christian Hatlo told Reuters, adding that Breivik had made the allegation since shortly after his arrest on July 22.

Hatlo added: "We have not uncovered a single one of them." He said the police had intentionally played down Breivik's alleging of 80 like-minded cells in order to avoid causing panic across the continent at the time.

At a news conference yesterday Hatlo said investigators had recovered 186 shell casings from the island where Breivik attacked the summer camp, killing 69 of his 77 victims.



Anders Behring Breivik

## Eight killed in US hair salon shooting

AFP, Los Angeles

Eight people were killed and one remained in critical condition Wednesday after a gunman opened fire in a packed hair salon in a small California town, police said.

The suspected gunman, a white male, was arrested a short time later about half a mile away from the Salon Meritage in Seal Beach, on the Pacific Coast Highway south of Los Angeles.

Local media reports said the gunman was ex-military and had multiple weapons and was wearing body armor at the time of the shooting. Police could not confirm this, but said he was arrested "without incident."

Police initially responded to a 911 call reporting gunfire at the salon, in a strip mall just across from the ocean.

### ALLEGED IRANIAN KILLING PLOT

## Obama calls Saudi king to mull actions

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama Wednesday called Saudi King Abdullah to discuss what US authorities said was a thwarted plot by Iranian government elements to assassinate the Saudi envoy to Washington.

The White House said the two leaders decried a "flagrant violation" of international norms and agreed to pursue a "strong and unified international response that holds those responsible accountable for their actions."

"President Obama spoke to King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia today about the successful disruption of the Iranian-directed conspiracy to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador in Washington, DC," a White House statement said.

"The president and the king agreed that this plot represents a flagrant violation of fundamental international norms, ethics, and law.

"The president and the king reaffirmed the strong partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia."

Earlier, the United States urged the world to take collective action against Iran with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton labelling the alleged plot by Al Quds force members to kill the Saudi ambassador a "dangerous escalation."

But Iran said that the idea it schemed to kill Ambassador Adel al-Jubeir was deluded and accused the United States of fabricating the charge to distract from its domestic economic woes.

## 5 Reasons To Be Sceptical Of Alleged Plot

US officials say they are certain the bizarre plot against Ambassador Adel Jubeir was real. But some analysts find it unlikely that the Iranian government, or legitimate factions within, would be involved in such a tangled plot.

**1. The alleged plot doesn't fit Iran's style**

In the 32-year history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, its Quds Force -- the branch implicated in the alleged plot -- has never been publicly linked to an assassination plot or an attack on US soil. In cases where Quds Force members have been accused of plotting attacks, they had gone to great lengths to cover their tracks and hire proxy groups of the highest caliber, like the Lebanese Hezbollah.

Hiring an Iranian-American used-car salesman who, according to investigators, openly talked about his connections to the Iranian military and brazenly made a \$100,000 wire transfer doesn't fit the Quds Force's modus operandi, analysts say.

**2. Iran would lose more than it would gain**

An assassination plot on US soil would be costly for Iran, analysts say, inviting further sanctions and isolation by the international community, and perhaps military action as well.

**3. Iran has much easier targets to go after**



Adel Jubeir

Iran has potential US and Saudi targets in its own backyard. In fact, Iran's Quds Force is frequently accused of waging proxy wars against US troops in neighbouring Iraq and Afghanistan and against Saudi interests in places like Bahrain.

**4. Iran is gaining in stature and isn't desperate for drastic measures**

Analysts say Iran has emerged as an undeniable power broker in the Middle East due in large part to the US-led elimination of two of its key enemies in the last decade -- Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq and the Afghan Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Analysts say a seemingly drastic measure like an assassination plot on US soil might perhaps make sense for a country desperate for attention, but not for Iran.

**5. The alleged plot is full of holes**

There seem to be too many unanswered questions at this point to conclude that this plot was conceived by the Iranian government or the leaders of the Quds Force.

Consider the following statements by US officials: When asked if the "upper reaches" of the Iranian government knew about the alleged plot, Attorney General Eric Holder said, "We are not making that charge at this point."

CNN ONLINE

### SCIENCE CORNER

### Scientists crack Black Death's genetic code

Scientists have mapped out the entire genetic map of the Black Death, a 14th century bubonic plague that killed 50 million Europeans in one of the most devastating epidemics in history. The work, which involved extracting and purifying DNA from the remains of Black death victims buried in London's "plague pits," is the first time scientists have been able to draft a reconstructed genome of any ancient pathogen.

### New stem cell method makes liver cells

British scientists have developed a new stem cell technique for growing working liver cells which could eventually avoid the need for costly and risky liver transplants. A team of researchers led by the Sanger Institute and the University of Cambridge used cutting-edge methods to correct a genetic mutation in stem cells derived from a patient's skin biopsy,



and then grew them into fresh liver cells.

### T rex bigger than thought

Tyrannosaurus rex grew faster and weighed more than previously thought, suggesting the fearsome predator would have been a ravenous teen-ager, researchers said Wednesday. Using three-dimensional laser scans and computer modelling, British and US scientists "weighed" five T rex specimens, including the Chicago Field Museum's "Sue," the largest and most complete T

REUTERS