

'Occupy' activists take to streets across planet

AFP, Madrid

Activists scuffled with police in London and decried the wealthy in Hong Kong yesterday as an unprecedented outcry against corporate greed and government cutbacks spread worldwide.

Inspired by America's "Occupy Wall Street" and Spain's "Indignants", people took to the streets in a rolling action targeting 951 cities in 82 countries from Asia to Europe, Africa and the Americas.

Anger over unemployment and opposition to the financial elite hung over the protests, which coincided with a Paris meeting of G20 financial powers pre-occupied by the eurozone debt crisis.

But the demands and the sense of urgency among the activists varied depending on the city.

Clashes broke out at an anti-capitalist protest in Rome attended by tens of thousands of people, with one group setting fire to a government office and riot police firing tear gas and water.

Some protesters smashed bank and shop windows and set cars alight, while others shouted "No to violence!" and tried to restrain them.

"Today is only the beginning. We hope to move forward with a global movement," said one protester, Andrea Muraro, a 24-year-old engineering student from northern Padua.

Scuffles broke out in London where about 300 people rallied in the financial district by Saint Paul's Cathedral, raising banners saying: "Strike back!"; "No cuts!" and "Goldman Sachs is the work of the devil!"

Three lines of police, and one line at the rear on horseback, blocked them from heading to the London Stock Exchange and pushed back against lead marchers, some wearing masks.

"I am here today mainly as a sense of solidarity with the movements that are going on around the world," said Ben Walker, a 33-year-old teacher from the eastern English city of Norwich.

A small group of about 50 protesters gathered outside of Africa's biggest bourse, the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, to voice concern over the country's widening gap between rich and poor.

As the day began, around 500 people gathered in the heart of Hong Kong's

financial district to vent their anger at the inequities and excesses of free-market capitalism, while 100 demonstrators in Tokyo also voiced fury at the Fukushima nuclear accident.

Around 600 demonstrators in Sydney set up camp outside Australia's central bank, where the plight of refugees and Aboriginal Australians was added to the financial concerns.

The "indignant" protests first took hold in Spain, which has a jobless rate of 20.89 percent rising to 46.1 percent for 16- to 24-year-olds, where for a month activists lived in a ramshackle camp in Puerta del Sol.

They then spread elsewhere in Europe, finding strong backing in crisis-hit countries like Greece, and then worldwide -- last month reaching the centre of global capitalism in Wall Street.

In New York, organisers have called a rally in Times Square at 2100 GMT.

Over 100 authors, including Salman Rushdie and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Michael Cunningham, have signed an online petition declaring their support for the protests.



PHOTO: AFP

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange joins peaceful demonstrators in central London; protests, *inset*, in Italy turns violent yesterday. Inspired by the Occupy Wall Street movement and Spain's "Indignants", people began taking to the streets across the world, targeting 951 cities in 82 countries.

Fierce fighting erupts in Yemen

22 Killed; drone kills top Qaeda leaders

AFP, Sanaa

At least 22 people were killed yesterday as Yemeni police opened fire on protesters and rival tribes clashed in Sanaa, while a suspected US air raid took out nine, including top al-Qaeda leaders.

Police shot dead 12 people and injured dozens as they opened fire on demonstrators in Sanaa demanding President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation, medics said.

And barely two weeks after a drone killed US-born jihadist cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, a suspected US air strike killed Friday a raft of top al-Qaeda leaders, including the media chief of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Egyptian Ibrahim al-Banna'a.

The son of Awlaki, Abderrahman, 21, was also among the nine dead in the strikes that hit the militant-held town of Azzan in Shabwa, a member of Awlaki's tribe said.

Also killed was Sarhan al-Qusaa'a,

brother of Fahd al-Qusaa'a, a leader of AQAP, who was on a US wanted list, the Awlaki tribesman said.

But last month, The Washington Post reported that the United States was building an array of secret new drone bases to strike al-Qaeda targets in Yemen and Somalia.

In Sanaa, security forces used live rounds as well as tear gas and water cannon to try to disperse hundreds of thousands of Saleh opponents trying to march on loyalist areas of the city centre from their Change Square stronghold, killing 12 people, witnesses and medics said.

Doctor Mohammed al-Qubati, the coordinator at a field hospital in the square, said two bodies were brought to the facility, and many others wounded, including at least 30 hit by gunfire, while 10 were in serious condition.

The clashes erupted on Al-Zubeiri Street which marks the dividing line between parts of Sanaa held by troops loyal to Saleh and those held by dissident units under the command of General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, who rallied to the opposition in March.

Activists had called on protesters to march on the front lines yesterday in a bid to bring to a head 10 months of increasingly bloody demonstrations against Saleh's 33-year rule in Sanaa.

The veteran president has refused to step down despite increasingly strident calls for his departure from both Western governments and impoverished Yemen's wealthy Arab neighbours in the Gulf.

According to a letter from Yemen's youth movement sent to the United Nations earlier this month, at least 861 people have been killed and 25,000 wounded since mass protests erupted across the country.

Also in northern Sanaa, 10 gunmen from the Hashid tribe which has sided with protesters against Saleh were killed in clashes with tribes loyal to the embattled president, a tribal source said.

Floods and landslides hit Central America 40 killed

BBC ONLINE

Two storms have hit Central America, triggering floods and landslides that have left about 40 people dead, officials said yesterday.

In Guatemala alone, at least 21 people were reported killed; six died in Nicaragua, and three in El Salvador.

As rains drenched Central America, Hurricane Jova hit Mexico's Pacific coast, leaving at least eight dead.

The United Nations said 100,000 people had been affected by flooding in Central America and Mexico.

Guatemala issued a "red alert" and reported landslides on roads and bridges badly damaged or carried away.

New Israel settlement plans 'unacceptable': UN

REUTERS, New York

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon criticized Israel on Friday over reports that it plans to build 2,600 more housing units in East Jerusalem, saying further settlement activity was "unacceptable."

"The Secretary-General is deeply concerned at continued efforts to advance planning for new Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem," Ban's press office said in a statement.

"Recent developments in this regard have been unacceptable, particularly as efforts are ongoing to resume (Israeli-Palestinian) negotiations, and run contrary to the Quartet's call on the parties to refrain from provocations," it said.

The Peace Now anti-settlement group said on Friday that Israel planned to build the housing units in a new urban settlement in East Jerusalem, angering Palestinians who want a halt to all such projects before they return to peace talks.

The "Quartet" of Middle East peace nego-

tiators -- the United States, Russia, the European Union and United Nations -- has urged Israel and the Palestinians to avoid provocative actions and urged them to resume stalled peace negotiations.

The Peace Now group said the settlement plan was approved earlier this week by an Israeli municipal committee, which had given the go-ahead for construction on the site that lies on land seized by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

There was no immediate comment from the municipal committee on the report, but the Palestinians said they believed the news was accurate.

"The Secretary-General reiterates that settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank is contrary to international law," the UN statement said, adding such activity "must cease."

The reports about a new settlement plan come as the Palestinians attempt to secure UN recognition of a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

NEWS IN brief

ICC chief in Ivory coast to probe abuses

BBC ONLINE

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo yesterday arrived in Ivory Coast to investigate the country's post-election violence.

Moreno-Ocampo will meet victims as well as government and opposition representatives during his visit.

About 3,000 people were killed and 500,000 displaced in months of unrest following the November 2010 poll.

Forces loyal to both President Alassane Ouattara, and his rival, Laurent Gbagbo, have been accused of abuses.

India, Pakistan draft agreement to ease visa procedure

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India and Pakistan on Friday finalized the draft of an agreement for liberalised visa under which travellers may soon be allowed to visit to more than three places in one visit.

The draft of the Bilateral Visa Agreement to ease travel for the nationals of either country desiring to visit the other was finalised during the second meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) here and will be submitted to the respective governments for obtaining necessary approvals in order to sign the Agreement at an early date, Indian Ministry of External Affairs said.

The draft also envisages multiple-entry travel visa for the businessmen from each country by providing more liberalised and simple visa procedure, according to official sources.

Cuba mulls term limits on leaders

BBC ONLINE

The Communist Party of Cuba yesterday announced that it will consider President Raul Castro's unprecedented call for term limits for all government officials.

A statement said the party conference in January would discuss a maximum of two five-year terms.

The document also called for the promotion of qualified young leaders.

Earlier this year, President Castro said Cuba must prepare a new generation to take over.

Raul Castro, who is now 80, said the same limits would apply to him.

He took over from his brother, Fidel, in 2008. Between them, they have ruled Cuba for 52 years since 1959.

GRAFT CHARGES India arrests ex-CM

AFP, Bangalore



Yeddyurappa

A powerful former leader of a southern Indian state was arrested yesterday on accusations of taking kickbacks in exchange for illegally selling government land.

The former chief minister of Karnataka, B S Yeddyurappa, surrendered to authorities in state capital Bangalore after a judge issued a warrant for his arrest.

Authorities allege that the illegal land deals cost the Karnataka state coffers \$950 million while Yeddyurappa and members of his family are said to have personally gained 1.89 billion rupees.

Court upholds sentence against Iran filmmaker

AFP, Tehran

A Tehran appeals court has upheld a six-year jail sentence and 20-year filmmaking and travel ban against international award-winning Iranian director Jafar Panahi, his family told AFP yesterday.

The verdict, handed down around two weeks ago, has not yet been carried out, the family said.

The government-run newspaper Iran confirmed the ruling in its yesterday's edition, saying: "The charges he was sentenced for are acting against national security and propaganda against the regime."

Panahi was convicted in December last year over a documentary he tried to make about the unrest that followed the disputed 2009 re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Panahi, 51, has won a slew of foreign awards for his films. But many are banned in Iran where authorities are unhappy with his satirical portrayal of everyday life in the Islamic republic.

Panahi's family said the filmmaker was still free pending the imposition of the jail sentence.



Jafar Panahi

US ventures into bloody Africa conflict

Obama sends military advisers to central Africa

AP, Washington

The United States is venturing into one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts, sending about 100 US troops to central Africa to support a years-long fight against a guerrilla group accused of horrific atrocities.

The Obama administration said the troops will advise, not engage in combat, unless forced to defend themselves.

In a letter to Congress, President Barack Obama said Friday that the troops will assist local forces in a long-running battle against the Lord's Resistance Army, considered one of Africa's most ruthless rebel groups, accused of murder, rape and kidnapping children, and help to hunt down its notorious leader, Joseph Kony.

The first of the troops arrived in Uganda on Wednesday, the White House said, and



others will be sent to South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the size of the US footprint is small, Obama's announcement represents a highly unusual intervention for the United States. Although some American troops are based in Djibouti and small groups of soldiers have been deployed to Somalia, the US traditionally has been reluctant to commit forces to help African nations put down insurgencies.

It demonstrates the Obama administration's escalating attention to and fears about security risks in Africa, including terror networks, piracy and unstable nations. The move was intended to show some engagement to lessen the impact of one of the worst protracted wars in Africa.

Let's Build A Beautiful Tomorrow

Asset DEVELOPMENTS

Owners of Land Plots Are Invited To Discuss Their Proposals

Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Old DOHS, Cantonment R/A New DOHS, Baridhara, Bashundhara, Lalmatia, Wari, Uttara Eskaton Garden & Other Prime Areas

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CALL US

Tel : 8857230 - 4

01713-000204

01713-041864



ASTD/16/011