

KEY EVENTS

JANUARY

Tunisia's president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali flees the country after 23 years in power.

FEBRUARY

In Egypt, Hosni Mubarak steps down. Nearly 850 civilians killed in the revolt. Rebellion erupts in Libya against the 42-year-old regime of Muammar Gaddafi. New Zealand's city of Christchurch was devastated by 6.3 magnitude quake.



Hosni Mubarak
Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen becomes the first victim of the eurozone crisis.

MARCH

A massive earthquake and tsunami devastates northeastern Japan, killing 20,000.

Syria becomes the next Arab country to face popular protests. The uprising is continuing there.

APRIL

Britain's Prince William and his bride Kate Middleton marry on 29.

MAY

Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden is shot dead by US commandos in Pakistan.

The start of anti-capitalism demonstrations in Spain. Serbia arrests Bosnia war criminal Ratko Mladic.



Ratko Mladic

JUNE

US declares Afghanistan troops pullout.

JULY

South Sudan proclaims independence and becomes the UN's 193rd member.

77 people are killed in a massive twin attack in Norway.

AUGUST

The police shooting of a 29-year-old black man in Tottenham, north London, provokes rioting in the capital and beyond.

SEPTEMBER

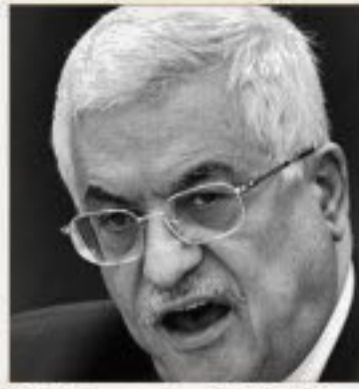
Afghanistan's former president Burhanuddin Rabbani assassinated.

Palestine's statehood bid submitted at UN.

OCTOBER

Three Arab women win the Nobel Peace Prize.

More than 600 die in a devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake in Turkey. Palestinians win entry to UNESCO and world's population passes 7 billion mark.



Mahmoud Abbas

NOVEMBER

The UN says it has "serious concerns" about Iran's nuclear activities.

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou stand down amid financial crisis.

Silvio Berlusconi follows Papandreou.

Thailand's worst floods in decades kill 666.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh hands over powers.

Egypt holds its first post-revolution election.

Britain's embassy in Tehran attacked.

DECEMBER

Storm and floods kill 1,000 in Philippines.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il dies aged 69.

The last US forces leave Iraq after nine years of war.



FLASHBACK 2011

A year of protests

2011 was a year for protests which counted for many governments.

Across the globe, this was a year when people took to the streets, often overthrowing their leaders in the process. That was true in the Arab world, in Russia, in India, in Western Europe, in the United States and even in China.

And everywhere, this year the conventional wisdom was turned upside down by people who turned out to be angrier than their elites had suspected, and better able to channel that dissatisfaction into mass protest and even revolution.

ALL PHOTOS: AFP, REUTERS

TOP STORIES

The Arab Spring

When a young man set himself aflame on a street in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, his cry of anguish at the hardship of life under a stifling autocracy echoed across the region. Within weeks, his protest had sparked a full-blown people-power revolution that spread quickly throughout the Middle East and inspired people through out the world.

The Wall Street Protests against

capitalism or anti corruption protests in India owe much to this phenomenon.

What started in Tunisia soon spread to Libya and Egypt before crossing the continent's borders en route to Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. The revolutions toppled government in Egypt and Tunisia; started a civil war in Libya resulting in the fall of its government; major protests in Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait,

Morocco, and Oman; and minor protests in Lebanon, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Western Sahara.

Britain's foreign secretary William Hague describes the Arab Spring as "the main event we have experienced so far in this century" and says the revolution will have a greater long-term impact than either the al-Qaeda attacks of 9/11 or the financial crisis of 2008.

Killing of bin Laden and its aftermath

On Sunday night, May 1, 2011, President Barack Obama made a televised declaration from the White House, heralding the discovery and death of Osama bin Laden, the US's most wanted foe. Bin Laden had been tracked to a compound in Abbottabad, a leafy town not far from Islamabad, Pakistan's capital. The clandestine raid that followed carried out by a crack unit of Navy SEALs took the world (and likely Pakistan's leaders) by surprise. Bin Laden's body was reportedly given Muslim rites of burial and dumped into the Arabian Sea.

The repercussions of his death were legion. It capped the decade-long manhunt that had originally driven the

Japan's triple disaster

James Nachtwey, an award-winning photographer for TIME who has spent years documenting the ravages of war, was awed by the destruction caused by the March 11 earthquake off the northeast coast of Japan and the cataclysmic tsunami it spawned. "The scale of this is beyond belief. It's apocalyptic," he said after visiting Japan in the quake's aftermath. Measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale, the temblor was one of the worst natural disasters in modern history, so powerful it knocked the whole planet off its axis by

a foot.

The quake and the waves it produced decimated towns and cities killing nearly 20,000 and causing hundreds of billions of dollars in financial damage. But a nuclear disaster in a plant called Fukushima proved to be the quake's most enduring aftershock, causing months of frantic emergency efforts, scares over radioactive contamination and global hand-wringing over the safety and viability of nuclear energy around the world.



Europe's financial crisis

The government-debt crunch rattled Europe's financial system and weighed on the global economy. Portugal became the third European country, after Greece and Ireland the year before, to require a bailout as its borrowing costs soared. And investors grew worried that countries with much larger debts, such as Spain and Italy, would also need help.

In Greece and Spain, incumbent governments fell and beleaguered prime ministers departed. The threat of fiscal contagion from Greece spreading elsewhere pushed Italy the euro zone's third biggest economy to the brink and forced the departure of controversial Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. The crisis has strained the very fabric of the EU and threatened the dissolution of the common euro currency.



Famine in the Horn of Africa

Deepening the already crisis hit region, this year was a terrible drought -- the worst, by some accounts, in more than 60 years. In July, the UN declared much of southern Somalia to be in a state of famine. Hundreds of thousands of starving Somalis fled to refugee camps on the Kenyan border at a rate of more than 1,000 a day. Thousands of people died in the Famine.

Wind of change in Myanmar

Myanmar, which replaced a long-ruling military junta this year, freed democracy icon Suu Kyi and adopted a series of reformist moves to end decades of international isolation. The reformist pledge was rewarded by US as its Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made a landmark visit to Myanmar later in the year.

Palestinian statehood bid at UN

With the Mideast peace process as moribund as it has ever been, the leaders of the Palestinian Authority this year chose to appeal directly to the United Nations in their pursuit of statehood.

But in subsequent months, the effort proved stillborn: the certainty of a US veto, as well as pressure applied by Washington on other members of the Security Council, has almost guaranteed that the Palestinians' bid won't get off the ground and may not even reach the General Assembly, where the occupied territories could receive at least the symbolic gloss of international legitimacy.

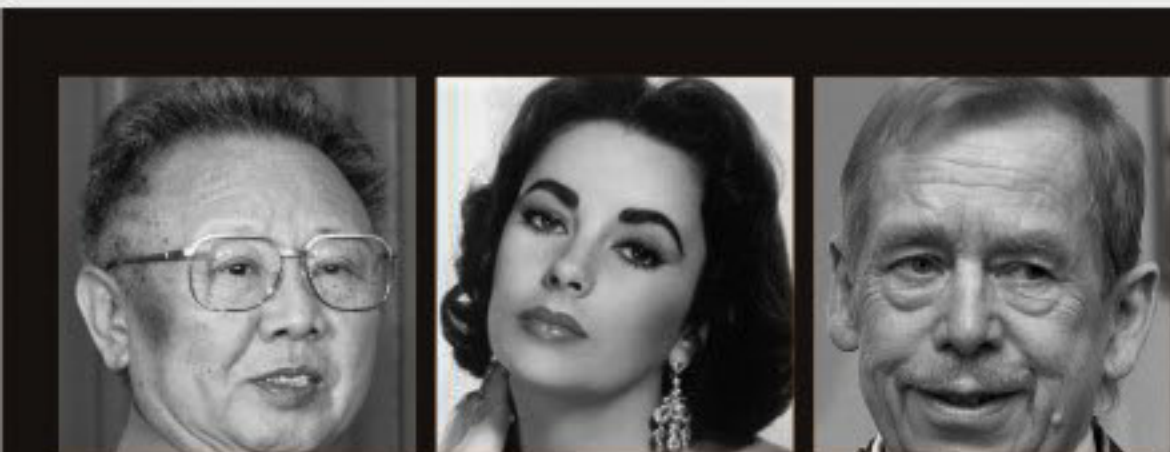
US to war in neighboring Afghanistan, while sounding a death knell for al-Qaeda. More crucially, the discovery of the location of bin Laden's hideout -- not in a mountain cave but in a quiet suburb just down the road from Pakistan's main military academy -- raised obvious alarms over Islamabad's commitment to fighting extremists. The ensuing months saw a steady deterioration of ties between Washington and Islamabad.

The fall of Gaddafi



Muammar Gaddafi's four-decade-long dictatorial rule over the oil-rich North African nation of Libya came to a grisly end Oct 20, 2011, but the months preceding his death were similarly bloody. In early March,

uprisings sparked by the Arab Spring unrest in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia exploded into full-fledged civil war, as barely trained militias rose up against Gaddafi's forces. Prompted by a rumored threat of genocide should Gaddafi overrun the rebel stronghold of Benghazi, the United Nations adopt a resolution in March that in essence legitimated a foreign intervention. Nato operations formally began at the start of April and steadily rolled back Gaddafi's forces. The war ended on Oct 20, after Gaddafi was seized by rebels and killed, his body placed on display in a meat locker in the port city of Misrata.



Deaths

Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed by US forces during a raid on his compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan.

Apple CEO Steve Jobs died at his home in Palo Alto, California, after a long fight against pancreatic cancer.

Former Czech president, acclaimed writer and political dissident Vaclav Havel died in his home in northern Bohemia.

Libya's former leader Muammar Gaddafi was killed during fighting in his home town of Sirt.

Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor died in Cedars Sinai Hospital, after being admitted with congestive heart failure.

Singer songwriter Amy Winehouse died of "accidental alcohol poisoning".

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il died of heart attack.

Phone hacking row

The News International phone-hacking scandal involving the News of the World and other British tabloid newspapers unethical practice rocked the world. In July 2011, it was revealed that the phones of murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, relatives of deceased British soldiers, and victims of the 7/7 London bombings were accessed, resulting in a public outcry against News Corporation and owner Rupert Murdoch. The incidents resulted in the closure of the News of the World on 10 July, ending 168 years of publication.

DSK vs Maid

IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a high-profile figure in French politics and global economics, resigns and faces trial after being accused of a sexual assault on a maid in his hotel suite in New York. The charges are later dismissed, but his presidential ambitions are ruined.



Rupert Murdoch

UK Royal wedding

Britain's Prince William and his bride Kate Middleton marry with huge crowds and a global TV audience watching Britain's biggest royal celebration for three decades.

The Norway massacre

On July 22, Norway experienced its worst single spasm of violence since World War II. In Oslo, a car bomb detonated near a set of prominent government buildings, killing eight people. The news was about to get far gristlier: at a youth summer camp on the island of Utoya, a gunman had mowed down 69 people.

While some commentators leaped to pin the attacks on Islamist terrorists, authorities eventually found one culprit: Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old Norwegian and far-right fanatic. He was later judged insane.

Hazare's anti-corruption fasts

In a year with more than its share of protests worldwide, perhaps the most striking act of dissent took place in India, where the country's ruling coalition took flak for a host of corruption cases implicating a number of leading politicians. Anna Hazare, a 74-year-old activist with a Gandhian air, embarked on a series of hunger strikes in protest of the graft that his supporters say pervades all strata of Indian society. The anti-corruption bill, for which Hazare fasted, is still being debated in Indian parliament.

