

2013 KEY EVENTS

JANUARY

Jan 11: MALI: France sends French forces to Mali to support that country's army and rout Islamists who are pushing south towards the capital Bamako.

Jan 16: ALGERIA: Islamists take hundreds of Algerian and foreign workers hostage at a gas site in Algeria's remote southeastern desert. On the 19th, Algerian special forces storm the gas complex. Thirty-seven foreign hostages die in the siege and rescue operation.

MARCH

March 13: VATICAN - Jorge Mario Bergoglio, an Argentinian Jesuit, becomes the first pope from Latin America, choosing the name of Francis. His election follows the resignation of pope Benedict XVI, the first papal resignation in modern times.

March 14: Chinese lawmakers name Xi Jinping as president four months after he takes charge of the Communist Party.

APRIL

April 15: UNITED STATES: Two blasts near the finish line of the Boston Marathon kill three people and wound more than 100. They are believed to have been the work of two brothers of Chechen origin, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev. Tamerlan dies later in a shootout with police, Dzhokhar is arrested.

JUNE

June 15: IRAN - With 50.68 percent of the vote, moderate cleric Hassan Rohani is elected president of Iran.

June 23: RUSSIA - Rogue US intelligence technician Edward Snowden, who leaked information on spying by the United States, arrives in Moscow from Hong Kong.

JULY

July 3: EGYPT - The army ousts Islamist president Mohamed Morsi amid a wave of mass protests. A political crisis ensues, marked on August 14 by an assault on Morsi supporters in which several hundred are killed.

July 22: BRITAIN - Prince William's wife Kate gives birth to a baby boy, providing the world's most famous royal family with a future king, George.

July 24: SPAIN - An eight-carriage high-speed train flies off the tracks near the northwestern city of Santiago de Compostela, killing 79 people.

AUGUST

August 21: SYRIA - 30 months into a civil war which has killed 120,000 people, Syrian troops are accused of chemical weapons strikes around the capital. On September 14 the United States and Russia agree on a plan to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, averting the threat of a US military strike.

SEPTEMBER

September 21: KENYA - A four-day siege of the Nairobi Westgate shopping mall by Somali Al-Qaeda-linked militants leaves at least 67 people dead and around 20 missing.

OCTOBER

October 1: UNITED STATES - The US government shuts down for the first time in 17 years and 800,000 federal workers stay home amid a budget impasse in the US Congress. The shut-down lasts 16 days.

October 3: ITALY - 366 African asylum seekers die off the Italian island of Lampedusa in a migrant boat disaster as they seek to reach Europe.

NOVEMBER

Nov 12: PHILIPPINES - Super Typhoon Haiyan -- one of the strongest storms on record -- sweeps through the Philippines' central islands, leaving more than 5,200 dead, and 1,600 missing.

Nov 24: SWITZERLAND - World powers reach what is hailed as an historic agreement with Iran to limit its controversial nuclear programme.

Nov 27: ITALY - Former Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi is stripped of his mandate as senator after being sentenced to a one-year prison term for tax fraud.

DECEMBER

DEC 05: SOUTH AFRICA - Nelson Mandela, icon of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa and a towering political figure of the 20th century, dies in Johannesburg at the age of 95.

DEC 09: THAILAND: Premier Yingluck Shinawatra calls a snap election to try to defuse the kingdom's political crisis, but protesters vow to keep up their "people's revolution" which started in late October after a bill was drafted to allow his Shinawatra's brother Thaksin to return from exile.

DEC: 28: Arvind Kejriwal takes charge in New Delhi state of India defeating Congress and BJP, just months after forming his AAm Admi Party to fight against rampant corruption.



KEY STORIES OF 2013

A ten years old boy carries a mortar shell in a weapons factory of the Free Syrian Army in Aleppo, September 7. (Anti-clockwise from bottom left) A submerged statue of the Hindu Lord Shiva stands amid the floodwaters of the Ganges river at Rishikesh in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand June 17; a child runs to safety as armed police hunt gunmen who went on a shooting spree at Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi September 21; Islamists in Egypt protest against a 'coup' that disposed Mohamed Mursi on July 05; survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan after a week on November 18, 2013.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



Snowden shakes the world



The cache of documents released by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden shed light on the extent of US espionage operations in various parts of the world and threatened to damage US relations with some key international players, who claimed in public to be furious with the US's snooping in their own countries.

The repercussions echoed far outside the intelligence community: US web companies could lose billions of dollars as international users turn to products they think are less prone to spying eyes. And it does the already tetchy relationship between Washington and Moscow little good when the latter is giving asylum to America's now best-known fugitive.

Syria's civil war and the war that didn't happen

On the morning of Aug. 21, reports emerged from a Damascus suburb of a sarin gas attack, a grim event in a civil war that had already cost the lives of 100,000 people and spurred the largest refugee crisis in a generation. Chilling videos of women and children, some twitching, others lifeless, brought out the strongest reactions yet from an international community that has sat on the sidelines for much of the country's grinding two-year-long civil war.

Ten days later, after releasing to the public an intelligence report determining that Syrian President Bashar Assad fired the weapons and killed at least 1,429 people, President Barack

Obama announced that he was going to ask Congress for authorization to strike Syrian chemical weapons installations. While Assad and his allies dismissed these allegations, the rebels seeking his overthrow appeared poised for a major breakthrough.

And then it never happened. US public opinion was dead set against another intervention in the Middle East. Russia, one of Assad's closest backers, managed to convince Damascus to cede its chemical weapons stockpile to a UN Security Council mandate. The Assad regime has reportedly been cooperating with UN inspectors as it goes about now eradicating its stockpile.

Pope Francis

The first time the little-known Argentinian appeared on the balcony at Saint Peter's on March 13, it was a shock that this was the man chosen to be the new pope. And the surprises have not stopped coming.



A pope unlike any other, Jorge Mario Bergoglio is using his skill as a communicator and his image as a man close to ordinary people to rehabilitate the battered image of Catholicism, addressing some of the thorny issues his predecessors had preferred to avoid, speaking out on world affairs and giving the Church a relevance and shine that is not only reversing its plummeting popularity but also winning over new followers. He was chosen as the Times person of the year.

Iran's new chapter

It was clear the new Iranian President Hassan Rohani, elected in June, was trying a new strategy when he wished Jews, in atweet, a "blessed Rosh Hashanah" on the Jewish new year.

In the space of a few months, Rohani and his new cabinet transformed the atmosphere surrounding Iran, a nation made into something of a pariah by the bellicose rhetoric of previous President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In September, after charming the international press corps at the UN General Assembly, Rouhani held a historic phone call with President Obama—the first direct dialogue between an American and Iranian head of state for three decades. In November, Iran reached a tentative agreement with the US and other global powers to curtail its nuclear program in exchange for waiving billions of dollars worth of sanctions. Skeptics abound — Israel is at



the head of the pack — but the deal could also jumpstart a new era of rapprochement with the Islamic Republic that will have repercussions across the region.

Supertyphoon Haiyan

The deadliest storm to hit the Philippines since at least Typhoon Tehlma in 1991, Haiyan smashed into the archipelago with wind speeds as high as 170 mph (more than 20 mph faster than Hurricane Katrina's worst gusts) and surging sea levels up to 20 feet. Despite preparations, including the evacuation of nearly 800,000 people, more than 5,000 people were killed as the storm wreaked havoc in central Philippines and leveled entire parts of the coastal city of Tacloban. Nearly 2 million people were left homeless.

Unrest in Egypt

In a televised speech July 3, Egyptian army chief Abdul Fatah el-Sisi told millions of Egyptians that the military had removed democratically-elected President Mohamed Morsi. The move was welcomed by millions of Egyptians who had taken to the streets to protest the divisive, one-year rule of the Islamist president, who, critics said, exploited his position to simply consolidate the power of his Muslim Brotherhood.

The post ouster clashes between supporters of the two camps killed dozens, polarizing Egyptian society. Thenuw rulers have cracked down on dissent so harshly that many say the Egyptian revolution has come full circle since the ousting of I Hosni Mubarak in 2011.



Indian sports players from the Madan Mohan Malviya Stadium light candles during an event to welcome the New Year in Allahabad, yesterday. People around the world are welcoming 2014.

PHOTO: AFP

NOTABLE DEATHS IN 2013

Nelson Mandela, apartheid icon, Nobel laureate and former South African president, aged 95, on December 5.



Hugo Chavez, Venezuelan president, aged 58 from cancer, on March 5.



Margaret Thatcher, UK's first female PM on April 8, aged 87.



David Frost, British TV giant, aged 74 of a heart attack on board the Queen Elizabeth cruise liner, on September 2.

"The Fast and the Furious" actor Paul Walker, aged 40, in a car crash on November 30.

2014: MAIN EVENTS

JANUARY

01: LATVIA - Joins the eurozone.
22: SWITZERLAND - Geneva to host an international conference to bring peace to Syria.

FEBRUARY

07-23: RUSSIA - Sochi hosts the XXII Winter Olympics.
No date set yet: EGYPT: Parliamentary elections (two months after voting on a new constitution)

MARCH

03-20: SOUTH AFRICA - Murder trial of Paralympic champion Oscar Pistorius.

APRIL

05: AFGHANISTAN - Presidential election
23-24: BRAZIL - Sao Paolo hosts global conference on Internet governance.

27: VATICAN - Canonisation of popes John XXIII and John Paul II.
30: IRAQ - Legislative elections.
SOUTH AFRICA - General elections, dates to be announced.

MAY

22: EUROPE - European Parliament elections, until May 25 in certain countries.
INDIA - To hold legislative elec-

tions sometime in the second quarter of 2014.

JUNE

04-05: RUSSIA - Group of Eight (G8) summit in Sochi.
06: FRANCE - 70th anniversary of the Allied landings in Normandy.
12: BRAZIL - FIFA football World Cup opens in Sao Paolo.

JULY

05: BRITAIN - Start of Tour de France cycling race in Leeds, England, to finish on July 27 in Paris.
09: INDONESIA - Presidential election.

11: BOSNIA - 19th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, when Serb forces killed almost 8,000 Bosnian Muslims.

AUGUST

01: EUROPE - 100th anniversary of the start of World War I.
TURKEY - Presidential election - on either the 14th or 28th.

SEPTEMBER

01: GERMANY - 75th anniversary of the start of World War II, when German troops invaded Poland.
18: BRITAIN - Scottish referendum on independence from Great Britain.

No date set: NEW YORK - UN climate summit.

OCTOBER

05: BRAZIL - General elections.

NOVEMBER

04: UNITED STATES - Mid-term legislative elections (Congress and state governors).
14-15: AUSTRALIA - Group of 20 (G20) summit in Brisbane

DECEMBER

03-14: PERU - Lima hosts 195 countries for a summit on climate change.
31: AFGHANISTAN - Deadline for withdrawal of Nato forces.