



2014 was a heart wrenching year that brought with it a litany of terror, turbulence and tragedy -- from the escalating conflict in Ukraine to a reignited war in Gaza; and from Ebola's deadly outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to the renewed racial debate in the United States after the killing of a few unarmed black men. But when the history of 2014 is written, it will take note of a larger fact that

FLASHBACK 2014



THE RISE OF ISLAMIC STATE

A radical Sunni Islamist group and an offshoot of al-Qaeda, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) rose to global prominence in June when it captured vast swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, effectively dissolving the border within the captured lands. On June 29 the group renamed itself "Islamic State" and proclaimed its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as "Caliph" - the head of the state. Known for their brutality, Islamic State are responsible for a series of video-taped beheadings of American and British hostages, including US journalist James Foley and British aid worker Alan Henning. As Islamic State gains more ground, an American-led coalition begins to supply aid and arms to the region. Starting with weapons for the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces fighting ISIS, by August 8 the US begins airstrikes against ISIS targets inside Iraq. By the end of October aircraft from Australia, Great Britain, France and Canada have all joined the US in attacking ISIS positions.



UKRAINE REVOLUTION & CRIMEA ANNEXATION

Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to backtrack on planned EU integration in favour of closer ties with Moscow sparked violent protest centred around Kiev's Maidan Nezalezhnosti ("Independence Square"). Beginning in November 2013, the protests reached fever-pitch on February 21 when Yanukovich finally caved to vast public pressure and fled the capital. Refusing to recognise the new Kiev government and dubbing the revolution a coup d'état, Russia moved to secure its existing military installations within Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. By March 21 Crimea was cut-off from Ukraine and totally under Russian control. The other pro-Russian territories in Ukraine are now fighting for greater autonomy, plunging the relation between Russia and the West to a level that is unprecedented after the end of Cold War.

OPERATION PROTECTIVE EDGE

At the start of July, following a military crackdown on Hamas prompted by the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenagers, Hamas initiates a sustained rocket bombardment of Israel from Gaza. The Israeli defence force responds by initiating Operation Protective Edge, an aerial and ground campaign against Hamas that lasted seven weeks and killed more than 2,200. The war devastated the Gaza enclave. Infrastructure of the already war-ravaged Hamas-run territory has been demolished. A significant number of the victims were children.



MH370, MH17 TRAGEDIES

Traveling from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, Malaysia Airlines flight 370 vanished on March 8 with 239 people on board. What follows is the largest search in aviation history spreading from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean. As the massive search led nowhere, baffled aviation experts have admitted the MH370's final resting-place could take years to discover. On July 17 Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 crashes near in the Ukrainian town of Torez, as it travels from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur - killing all 298 on board. Crash investigation teams conclude the plane was shot down after being mistaken for a military transport.

FERGUSON RIOTS & OTHERS

The shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri by a white police officer ignites racial tensions in the United States, leading to civil unrest, looting



and riots. Following an investigation into the events surrounding the shooting by officer Darren Wilson, a Grand Jury announces on November 24 they will not be pursuing a criminal investigation against the police officer, triggering more protests across 170 US cities. Later similar incidents triggered more protests highlighting the tension between the black-white communities.

EBOLA CRISIS

Beginning in Guinea at the end of 2013, the West African Ebola epidemic quickly spread to neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone. The worst outbreak of the disease in history, by November the World Health Organisation estimated that there had been over 20,081 cases, with 7,842 deaths.



RISE OF BJP

Running across nine phases, India went to the polls in 2014. With around 815 million Indians registered to vote, the mammoth democratic process concluded on May 12. Four days later Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi of BJP was declared the winner, having taken 60 percent of the seats in parliament.

COUP IN THAILAND

On May 22 Thai Army chief General Prayuth Chan-ocha launches a Coup d'état against the politically-troubled caretaker government of Thailand. Temporarily imposing martial law, the general four days later announced the King's blessing of his position as the head of the military council that will now run the country till a proposed election at the first half of 2016.

FIRST LANDING ON A COMET

After a 10-year mission across the cosmos on November 12, the Rosetta space probe makes history by deploying and landing its Philae mini-lab on the surface of a comet. Travelling at a speed of 135,000 km/h, the European Space Agency likened the landing on comet 67P/Churyumov-Gerasimenko to, 'landing a washing machine on a speeding bullet'.

SOUTH KOREA FERRY TRAGEDY

Carrying 476 people and travelling from Incheon on mainland Korea to the island of Jeju, the MV Sewol sank on the morning of April 16, killing 304 on-board. The majority who perished were secondary school children who were ordered to remain in their cabins while captain Lee Joon-seok and his crew scrambled to safety. On November 11, Captain Joon-seok was sentenced to 36 years in prison for gross negligence.

NOBEL FOR MALALA, KAILASH

On December 10, Pakistani education activist Malala Yousafzai and Indian child rights campaigner Kailash Satyarthi received the Nobel Peace Prize awards. The Nobel committee described both laureates as "champions of peace". Malala, 17, was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen in October 2012 for campaigning for girls' education. She is the youngest-ever recipient of a Nobel prize.

US-CUBA RELATIONS

After more than 50 years, on December 18, the United States and Cuba have agreed to restore diplomatic ties. A day earlier, after 18 months of secret talks, Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro agreed in a phone call on a breakthrough prisoner exchange, the opening of embassies in each other's countries, and an easing of some restrictions on commerce.



PAK SCHOOL MASSACRE

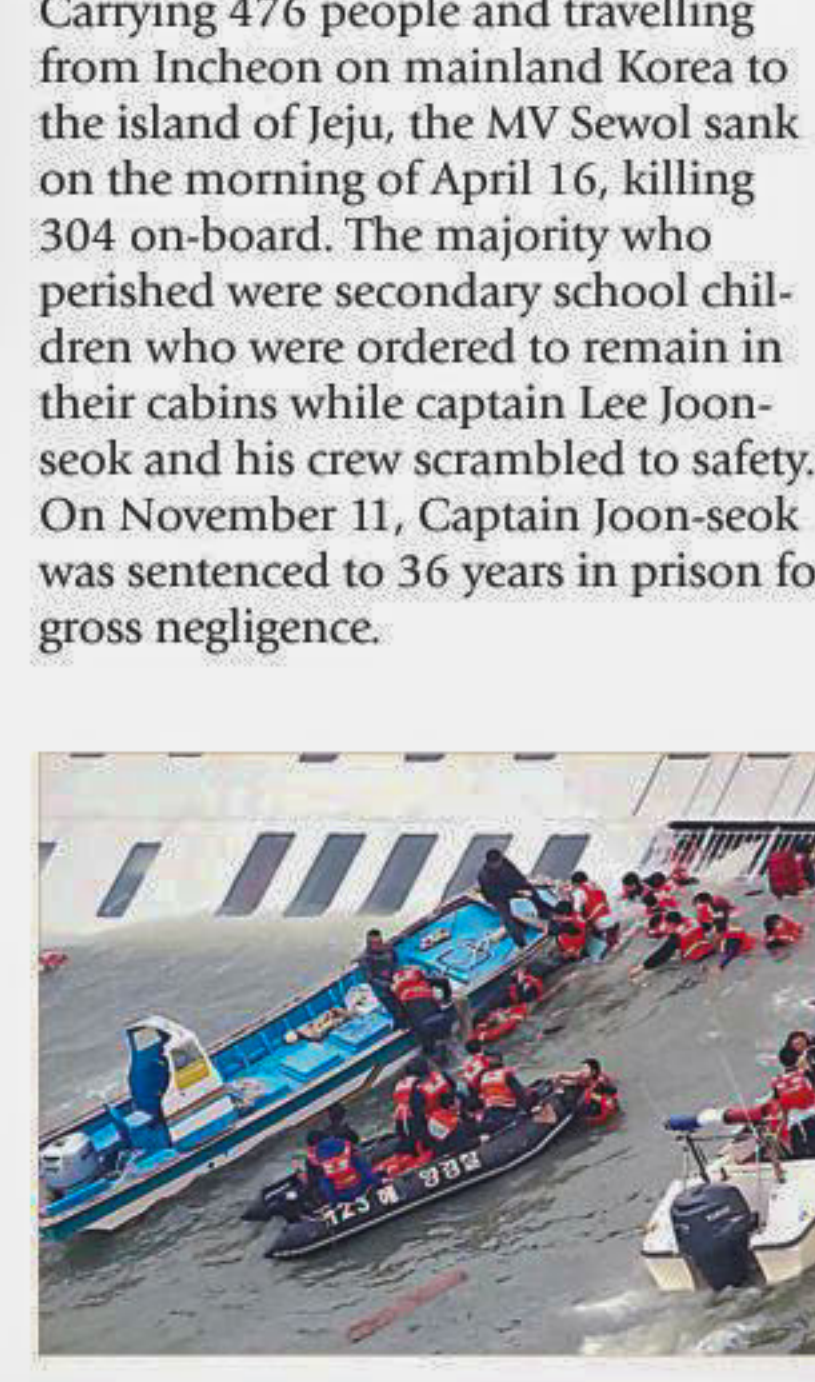
On 16 December 2014, seven members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan conducted a terrorist attack on the Army Public School in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. They entered the school and opened fire on school staff and children, killing 147 people, including 132 children, ranging between eight and eighteen years of age. This was the deadliest terrorist attack ever to occur in Pakistan which the country termed as its 9/11.

NIGERIAN SCHOOLGIRLS' ABDUCTION

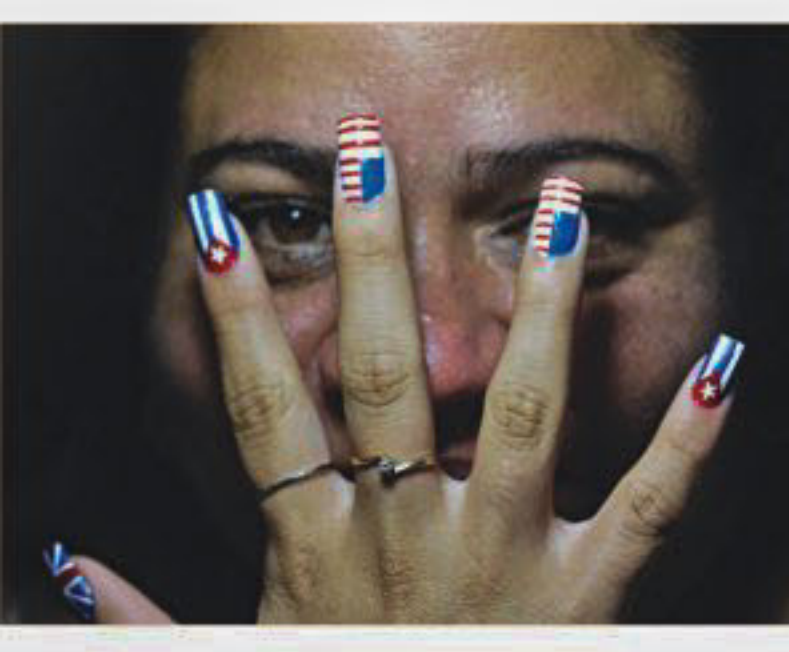
Armed militants from Islamist movement Boko Haram storm an all-girls secondary school in the village of Chibok, Nigeria, kidnapping 276 teenagers. The kidnapping sparked international outrage with numerous countries pledging to help locate the missing girls and eradicate the Boko Haram. Despite all the efforts, only a handful of girls have been recovered.



US-CUBA RELATIONS



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NOTABLE DEATHS



JAN 11 - Ariel Sharon, Israeli politician and general, dies from heart failure at 85



JAN 27 - Pete Seeger, American folk singer and activist, helped create the modern American folk music movement, dies at 94



FEB 2 - Philip Seymour Hoffman, American actor (Capote, Moneyball) dies at 46 of a suspected drug overdose



APR 17 - Gabriel García Márquez, Colombian novelist, short-story writer, screenwriter and journalist, dies of pneumonia at 87



MAY 28 - Maya Angelou (Marguerite Johnson), American author, poet and actress (Nyo-Roots), dies at 86



AUG 11 - Robin Williams, American actor and comedian, commits suspected suicide at 63