



WAR AGAINST ISLAMIC ST Manbij freed

Militants free 2,000 'human shields'

AGENCIES

More than 2,000 civilians held captive by IS as human shields have been freed after militants were driven out of a key stronghold in Syria.

Colonel Chris Carver, a spokesperson for the US-led coalition, hailed the capture of Manbij as a "strategic loss" for the so-called Islamic State.

Jubilant scenes greeted the end of weeks of battles as men, women and children poured into streets now controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Syrian Arab Coalition (SAC).

Families ran through rubble-strewn streets, past the ruins of buildings destroyed in air strikes, carrying their babies and belongings.

A trickle of people became a flow of hundreds of civilians, followed by dozens of cars, lorries and vans packed with families finally freed from IS.

Kurdish television showed men jubilantly having their beards cut off as women ripped off their veils and set them on fire.

The alliance of Arab and Kurdish rebels had driven most IS fighters out of the city by last week but a remaining band of jihadists continued to resist, capturing the 2,000 civilians as they withdrew from a suburb.

It was unclear under what conditions the civilians were freed, although the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said an agreement was made between the SDF and IS using local mediators.

The group said it had seen a letter from SDF forces threatening to push further into IS territory if militants did not agree to free the captured civilians in exchange for IS prisoners.

More than 1,000 IS fighters were killed in the offensive, according to the Observatory, as well as around 300 SDF fighters. Monitors recorded the deaths of at least 437 civilians, including 105 children, during the operation from 31 May to 12 August. The Observatory said 200 of those were killed in air strikes by the US-led coalition.

Manbij was being used as a IS hub for the lucrative trade of looted artefacts and other IS exports, due to the city's location near the Turkish border and on an intersection of major roads.

Manbij is expected to facilitate an advance on IS's de-facto Syrian capital of Raqqa, which lies 80 miles away.

PHOTO: REUTERS

TASTE OF FREEDOM

Scenes of jubilation and defiance. (From top left, anti-clockwise) An SDF fighter kisses a crying man; a man cuts the beard of a civilian; women run with newborn babies; and a woman adding her veil to a pile of niqabs burning in Manbij, Syria, after being freed from Isis on Friday. The joyful scenes were a welcome departure from months of siege, air strikes and battles to re-take the city, which was overrun by the terror outfit in January 2014.

Hire more refugees

Merkel to urge chiefs of big companies

REUTERS, Berlin

Chancellor Angela Merkel has invited executives from some of Germany's biggest listed companies to attend a summit next month where she will urge them to hire more refugees, the newspaper Bild reported yesterday.

More than one million migrants flooded into Germany last year, and the government wants to get as many as possible into the job market, which would reduce their dependence on the state and compensate for labor shortages as the workforce ages.

Merkel will push reluctant German companies to offer more traineeships and position to refugees, Bild reported. Large companies have been criticized for doing little to help integrate the refugees into the thriving job market.

Companies say most of the new arrivals lack the German language skills and the education required for a job.



Engineering giant Siemens (SIEGn.DE), chemicals group Evonik, carmakers Opel and VW and utility RWE will share with Merkel the results of pilot projects with refugees, Bild said.

Merkel's office declined to confirm Bild's report, which said the meeting at the chancellery will take place Sept. 14.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung reported a month ago that the 30 biggest DAX-listed companies had until June employed only 54 refugees, including 50 who were hired by logistics provider Deutsche Post DPWG.DE.

Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel last month urged large companies to do more for refugees, saying their efforts pale in comparison to the Mittelstand, the small and medium-size companies considered the backbone of Europe's biggest economy.

More than 1.1 million migrants arrived in Germany last year, mostly refugees fleeing conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

KASHMIR UNREST India rejects UNHRC probe

PTI, New Delhi

An all-party meeting called to discuss the recent violence in Kashmir unanimously rejected a move by the UNHRC to send a team to the state to investigate alleged human rights violations by Indian security forces.

While PM Modi asserted that PoK "is ours", foreign minister Sushma Swaraj told party leaders that the government had received a letter from the UN Human Rights Council, exploring the possibility of a visit to J&K. This was in apparent response to Pakistan writing to the body. All parties in one voice rejected any outside probe into the violence and allegations of human rights violations.

Party leaders said the move could amount to interference in India's internal affairs.

The UNHRC letter comes days after Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif wrote to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, urging efforts to "end the persistent and egregious violation of the basic human rights of the Kashmiri people".

The prime minister ruled out any major concessions in dealing with the protests in Kashmir in terms of engagement with Pakistan and also made it amply clear that talks with separatists were not on his to-do list.

Similarly, the violation of human rights in Balochistan should be brought to the attention of the global audience, he said.

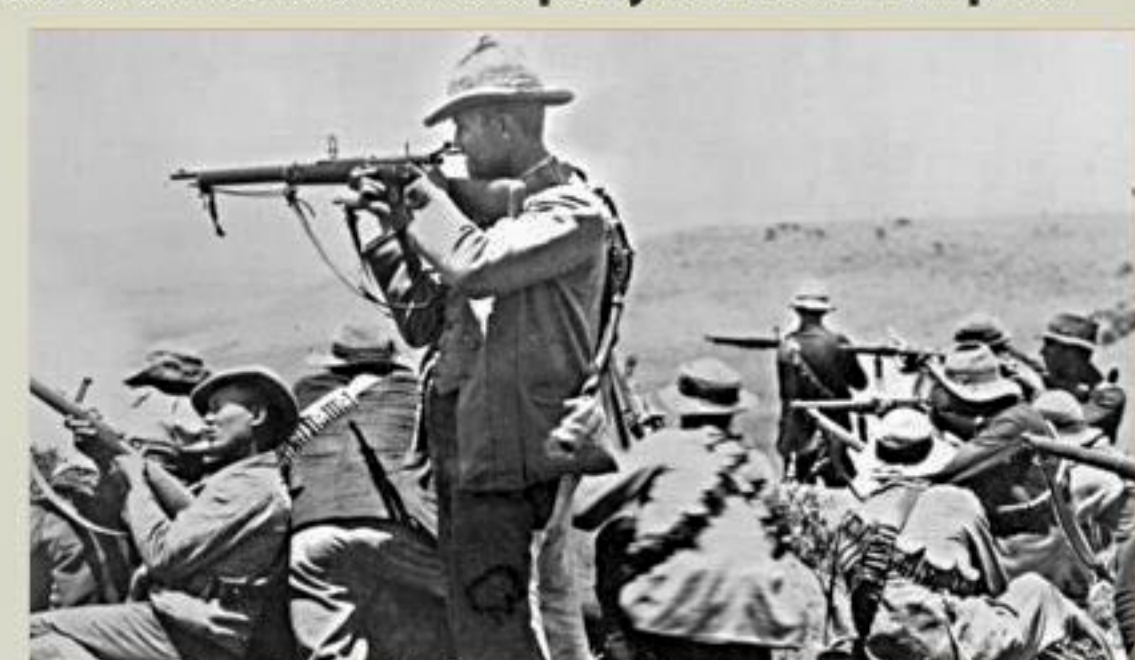
BRITISH EMPIRE: 5 WORST ATROCITIES

A look back in history as India, Pakistan celebrates 1-days

At its height in 1922, the British empire governed a fifth of the world's population and a quarter of the world's total land area. A new YouGov poll has found the British public are generally proud of the British Empire and its colonial past. YouGov found 44 per cent were proud of Britain's history of colonialism, with 21 per cent regretting it happened and 23 per cent holding neither view. Although the proponents of Empire say it brought various economic developments to parts of the world it controlled, critics point to massacres, famines and the use of concentration camps by the British Empire.

BOER CONCENTRATION CAMPS

During the Second Boer War (1899-1902), the British rounded up around a sixth of the Boer population - mainly women and children - and detained them in camps, which were overcrowded and prone to outbreaks of disease, with scant food rations. Of the 107,000 people interned in the camps, 27,927 Boers died, along with an unknown number of black Africans.



AMRITSAR MASSACRE

When peaceful protesters defied a government order and demonstrated against British colonial rule in Amritsar, India, on 13 April 1919, they were blocked inside the walled Jallianwala Gardens and fired upon by Gurkha soldiers. The soldiers, under the orders of

PARTITIONING OF INDIA

In 1947, Cyril Radcliffe was tasked with drawing the border between India and the newly created state of Pakistan over the course of a single lunch. After Cyril Radcliffe split the subcontinent along religious lines, uprooting over 10 million people, Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were forced to escape their homes as the situation quickly descended into violence. Some estimates suggest up to one million people lost their lives in sectarian killings.

FAMINES IN INDIA

Between 12 and 29 million Indians died of starvation while it was under the control of the British Empire, as millions of tons of wheat were exported to Britain as famine raged in India. In 1943, up to four million Bengalis starved to death when Winston Churchill diverted food to British soldiers and countries such as Greece while a deadly famine swept through Bengal. Talking about the Bengal famine in 1943, Churchill said: "I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion. The famine was their own fault for breeding like rabbits."

MAU MAU UPRISING

Thousands of elderly Kenyans, who claim British colonial forces mistreated, raped and tortured them during the Mau Mau Uprising (1951-1960), have launched a £200m damages claim against the UK Government. Members of the Kikuyu tribe were detained in camps, since described as "Britain's gulags" or concentration camps, where they allege they were systematically tortured and suffered serious sexual



assault. Estimates of the deaths vary widely; historian David Anderson estimates there were 20,000, whereas Caroline Elkins believes up to 100,000 could have died.

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



PHOTO: AFP

In this photograph received from the Press Information Bureau (PIB) on August 13, 2016, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi (meets with Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in New Delhi, yesterday. Wang is visiting India for holding talks with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on various issues of mutual interest. Talks are expected to be held on India's NSG bid and territorial disputes in South China Sea.

DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE Sweden's youngest ever minister quits

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden's youngest ever cabinet minister, who came to the country as a refugee from Bosnia, announced her resignation yesterday after being caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

Aida Hadzialic, 29, minister for secondary and adult education, revealed that she had been stopped by police in the southern city of Malmo and tests showed she had an alcohol level of 0.2 grammes per litre of blood -- just the level considered an offence in Sweden.

"That was the biggest mistake of my life... I will take responsibility. I announce my intention to resign from my ministerial post," an emotional Hadzialic told a press conference at government headquarters in Stockholm.

"I understand that a lot of people are disappointed in me. And I am angry with myself, and certainly I deeply regret it," added the young politician seen as the future of the Social Democrat party.

Hadzialic was born in Bosnia and immigrated to Sweden at the age of five, in 1992, with her parents fleeing the war in the Balkans.



Trump stumbles on nat'l stage

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump hasn't quite asked the dead to vote for him, but he's nearly there.

"I joke a lot as I say if you're sick, if you just got the worse prognosis that a doctor can give you, if you're lying in bed and you just know you're not going to make it -- you have to get up on November 8th and you have to vote," he said Thursday.

The Republican presidential candidate is a bit worried about his chances in November against Hillary Clinton, and he's not exactly hiding it.

And his team is struggling to transform his winning primary campaign model into an unbeatable national election machine.

During the Republican primaries, the Manhattan real estate mogul and former television star ignored the experts and the pundits who told him to be more "presidential," to stop insulting his rival and to prepare his speeches. To everyone's surprise, Trump's iconoclastic strategy worked.

party's standard-bearer, at the urging of his aides, he has given more policy-driven speeches using a teleprompter.

But part of him visibly chafes at the constraints, and he's quick to go off-script -- and off-message, as evidenced by some of his near-daily missteps in recent weeks: over Russia, the parents of a Muslim soldier killed in action, on guns and



Hillary Clinton, and on the Islamic State group and President Barack Obama.

Winning a presidential election historically requires more than just catchy slogans. It also requires a massive communications budget.

According to ABC News, the Democrat's campaign and her main super PAC (political action committee)

have spent nearly \$93 million on television ads against just \$11 million spent by outside groups backing Trump.

The Republican's official campaign committee has so far spent nothing on television ads -- practically unheard of in modern campaigns.

The US presidential election is an indirect one -- voters in each state technically pick a slate of party electors -- not one of the candidates -- when they cast their ballots. The winner needs a majority of the 538 votes in the Electoral College, or 270.

Experts for the specialized political newsletter Sabato's Crystal Ball at the University of Virginia are predicting that Clinton will win easily, with 347 electoral votes against 191 for Trump.

Trump's face with the prospect of defeat, Trump so far seems oddly detached.

"If at the end of 90 days I fall short... even though I'm supposed to have a lot of good ideas, it's OK. I go back to a very good way of life," he told CNBC.

"It's either going to work or I'm going to, you know, I'm going to have a very, very nice long vacation."

Castro lashes out at US as he turns 90

AFP, Havana

Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro revived old enmities with the United States as he celebrated his 90th birthday yesterday, skewering Havana's Cold War foe for its repeated attempts on his life.

Castro, who retired from public life in 2006 due to ill health and appointed his brother Raul in his place, criticized US President Barack Obama for failing to explicitly apologize during his historic visit to Japan in May for Washington's decision to drop the atomic bomb.

"That's why you have to stress the need to preserve peace and that no power has the right to kill millions of people," Castro said in an article published by official media.

According to Cuban intelligence services, Castro faced 634 plots between 1958 and 2000. Several of those have been substantiated by US officials; some reportedly involved slipping poisoned or explosive cigars to the cigar-loving Cuban leader.

Castro's brother Raul restored diplomatic relations with Washington last year.

Castro warned in his article about the risks of global overpopulation, calling it "the greatest threat in the history of mankind." He singled out China and Russia as "great powers that cannot be subjected to threats of deploying nuclear weapons."