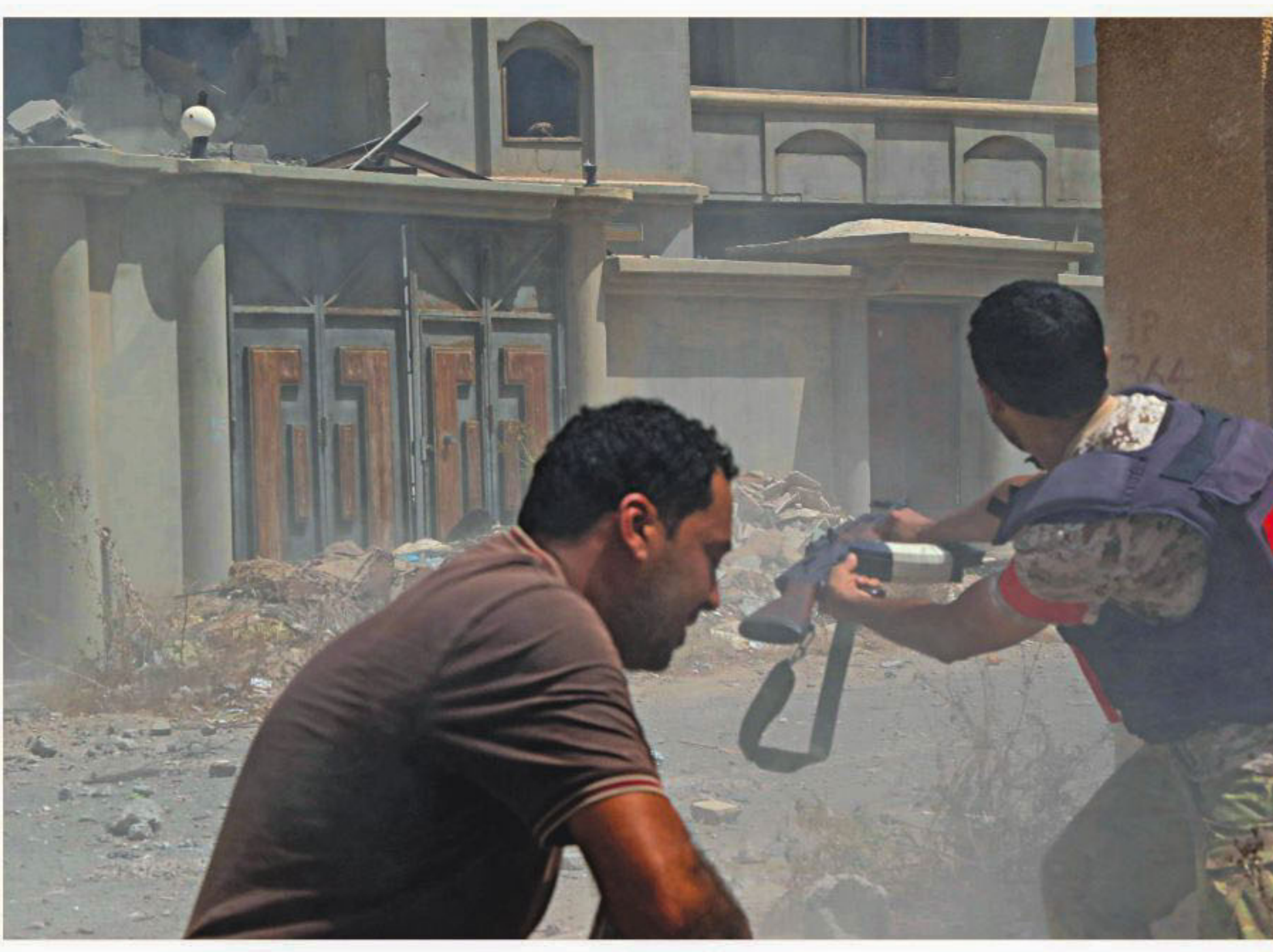




Drug users are not human

Says Philippines' Duterte
AFP, Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, who is waging a bloody war on crime, has justified the large-scale killing of drug users by suggesting the victims were not human. Duterte, who has seen about two thousand people killed since he was elected in May, made the remarks late Friday as he shrugged off the United Nations' concerns over human rights in his country. "Crime against humanity? In the first place, I'd like to be frank with you: are they humans? What is your definition of a human being?" he told soldiers while visiting an army camp, according to transcripts of his speech released afterwards. "Human rights? Use it properly in the right context if you have the brains," he added. "You cannot wage a war without killing," Duterte said, adding that many drug users were beyond rehabilitation. His remarks came after various UN officials, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in June condemned this apparent support for extra-judicial killings. The UN special rapporteur on summary executions, Agnes Callamard, said earlier this month that his directives "amount to incitement to violence and killing, a crime under international law". Duterte's comments come after his national police chief Ronald Dela Rosa on Friday urged drug users to kill their traffickers and burn their homes. "Why don't you give them a visit, pour gasoline on their homes and set these on fire to register your anger," Dela Rosa said.



Members of the forces loyal to Libya's UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) fire their weapons at enemy positions yesterday, in the coastal city of Sirte, during a military operation to clear the Islamic State group's (IS) jihadists from the city.

PHOTO: AFP

WAR ON IS IN SYRIA, LIBYA

Turkey-backed Syrian rebels aim for Manbij

Libyan forces push into last IS-held areas of Sirte

AGENCIES

A Syrian rebel commander said that Turkish-backed rebels aim to capture Manbij city from Kurdish-allied forces as conflict between the sides escalated in northern Syria yesterday.

Manbij on the west bank of the Euphrates River was captured this month from Islamic State by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance, including the powerful Kurdish YPG militia, in a United States-backed offensive.

Colonel Ahmed Osman, head of the Sultan Murad rebel group, told Reuters that the Turkey-backed rebel force was "certainly heading in the direction Manbij" since YPG forces had fortified their positions rather than evacuate.

The United States and Turkey have both demanded that the Kurdish forces withdraw to the east bank of the Euphrates. The YPG says its forces have withdrawn from the area and their presence could not be used as a pretext for an attack.

Asked how long he expected the Turkey-backed rebel forces to advance to Manbij and

take it, Osman said "a few days, God willing".

Meanwhile, forces loyal to Libya's UN-backed unity government yesterday pushed into the last areas of Sirte held by the Islamic State group in what was the jihadists' coastal stronghold.

Loyalists to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord have for more than three months been pressing an offensive to retake the city from the jihadists, reports AFP.

IS captured Sirte -- which had been the hometown of Libya's slain dictator Moammar Gaddafi -- in June 2015, sparking fears the extremists would use it as a launchpad for attacks in Europe.

Pro-GNA forces earlier this month made a significant breakthrough by seizing a conference centre where IS had set up base, pinning down the jihadists in a small downtown area near the sea.

"Our forces entered the last areas held by Daesh in Sirte: district number one and district number three," a spokesman for the pro-GNA forces said yesterday, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

S'pore reports 41 locally transmitted Zika cases

AFP, Singapore

Singapore yesterday confirmed 41 locally transmitted cases of the Zika virus, which can cause deformities in unborn babies, and said more infections are likely.

A day after announcing its first locally transmitted case, that of a 47-year-old Malaysian woman resident, the government reported 40 more -- mostly foreign workers at a construction site.

All 41 are residents or workers in a particular suburban residential and industrial district, the Ministry of Health and the National Environment Agency said in a joint statement.

Duterte's comments come after his national police chief Ronald Dela Rosa on Friday urged drug users to kill their traffickers and burn their homes.

"This confirms that local transmission of Zika virus infection has taken place."

It said that at this point the community transmission of the virus appears to be

localised within the Aljunied Crescent and Sims Drive area, which hosts high-rise residential blocs and some industries.

However, since Zika is spread by the Aedes mosquito -- which also carries the dengue virus -- the health ministry "cannot rule out further community transmission... since some of those tested positive also live or work in other parts of Singapore", the statement said.



The health ministry said it has alerted clinics and hospitals to be "extra vigilant" and report patients with symptoms associated with the virus, mainly fever and rash.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong told local media more imported cases are likely because Singapore is an international travel hub.

And because many Zika carriers display only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all -- meaning infected people may not seek treatment -- local transmission of these imported cases "is also very high", he said.

'All collapsed, except mountains'

Drawing out children's trauma in quake-hit Italy

AFP, Amatrice

Inside a shady tent in the middle of quake-hit Amatrice, a little girl hunches over a table drawing a picture of the soaring mountains overlooking this small Italian town.

For her, the drawing showed the only thing that remained constant after Wednesday's earthquake which brought death and destruction a string of remote hilltop towns and villages in central Italy.

Not far from the morgue where families have been identifying their dead, a group of children are playing in a tent set up by Save the Children, using drawing as a way to express the trauma they have experienced.

"This little girl drew the mountains and she told us that they were the mountains of Amatrice, the most beautiful in the world," Save the Children spokeswoman Danilo Giannese told AFP.

"Then she said; 'Everything collapsed, except the mountains.'"

That drawing had particularly affected those working for the NGO, which has set up a play area where

children can recover some sense of the normalcy which has been lost through the traumatic events of recent days.

The idea is to create a space where children can be with their peers and express themselves through play and drawing, under the supervision of



educators trained to handle emergency situations.

It also gives the parents some time to process their grief, to deal with pressing problems and start planning for the future, knowing their children are enjoying a bit of peace in a safe

place, the charity says.

Though they play and even laugh, the children have been as badly affected by the disaster as the adults.

"These are children who have suffered shock; suddenly, they had to abandon their homes and since then, they have only seen destruction," explains Giannese.

Many of the local children were sent away to relatives or friends in the wake of Wednesday's deadly quake, in which nearly 300 people died, while others remain in hospital.

Although these ones have survived, the trauma is far from over.

Once the children's immediate needs are met, it will soon be time to think about the upcoming school year, which begins in mid-September in Italy.

But with the local school in ruins, the question is where.

"The authorities are studying different solutions, but it is likely that school will take place in the tents," said a staff member. "For children, going back to school will be very important because they can talk with each other and tell their story about what happened."

Deportations immediately if sworn in, vows Trump

AFP, Washington

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump linked illegal immigration and employment Saturday, pledging to start deporting offenders as soon as he is sworn in should he become the White House's next occupant.

Trump all the while courted the black vote, claiming that the shooting of basketball star Dwyane Wade's cousin will make African Americans support him, but the move instead triggered a firestorm of criticism.

"On Day One, I am going to begin swiftly removing criminal illegal immigrants from this country - including removing the hundreds of thousands of criminal illegal immigrants that have been released into US communities under the Obama-Clinton administration," Trump told supporters in Des Moines, Iowa.

Trump's Democratic rival Hillary Clinton served as secretary of state during President Barack Obama's first term in office. The next president will be sworn in on January 20.

"I am going to build a great border wall, institute nationwide e-verify, stop illegal immigrants from accessing welfare and entitlements and develop an exit-entry tracking system to ensure those who overstay their visas are quickly removed," Trump warned.

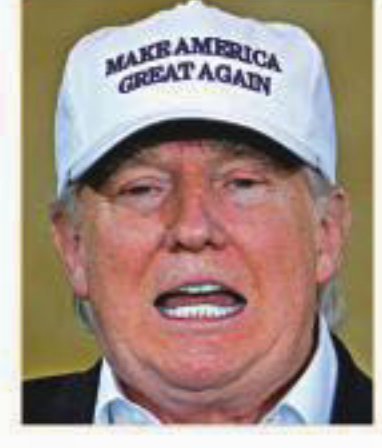
Details of Trump's immigration policies remain scant. He rallied much of his primary support with a controversial headline tone against illegal immigrants and his plan to build a wall on the Mexican border.

Some of his advisors are now reportedly urging him to tone down his signature policy priority.

Earlier, former Alaska governor Sarah Palin has warned Trump of "massive disappointment" if he does not follow through with his promise

to deport the 11 million undocumented immigrants currently living in the US.

But he recently walked back his stance and has suggested a "softening" in his immigration position in a Fox News town hall with Sean Hannity. Trump proposed that "the good ones" -- law-abiding undocumented immigrants -- can stay in the US if they "pay back-taxes".



Indonesian policemen guard a blindfolded suspect who attacked a priest in Medan yesterday. The knife-wielding attacker stabbed the Catholic priest and tried to set off an explosive device at a church during a mass, police said, the latest in a string of attacks on religious minorities in the mainly Muslim country. The priest suffered slight injuries. A picture of the attacker's ID card circulating online said he was Muslim. Police are still investigating the man's motive.

NEWS IN brief

Coalition strikes kill 7 Yemeni civilians

AFP, Aden

Warplanes from the Saudi-led coalition struck a rebel convoy near a taxi stand in central Yemen, killing seven civilians and nine insurgents, officials said yesterday. The air strikes hit three vehicles belonging to the Huthi rebels late Saturday near the city of Taz, a military official said. More than 6,600 people, mostly civilians, have been killed since March 2015 and more than 80 percent of the population has been left in need of humanitarian aid, according to the UN.

North Korea rejects UNSC condemnation

AFP, Seoul

North Korea yesterday hit back at a UN Security Council statement condemning its latest test-firing of a submarine-launched ballistic missile, and threatened to take further steps as "a full-fledged military power". North Korea is barred under UN resolutions from any use of ballistic missile technology, but has carried out several launches following its fourth nuclear test in January.

Two Ukrainian soldiers killed in separatist east

AFP, Kiev

Two Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in fresh clashes between government forces and pro-Russian rebels in the country's war-torn east, the military said yesterday. Tensions between Ukraine and Russia escalated this month after the Kremlin accused Kiev of plotting armed incursions into Russian-annexed Crimea.

What are tomatoes, sweets?

Syrian children discover the joy of foods for the first time

AFP, Hrajela

Yazan, a four-year-old who has never known anything but deprivation, has finally discovered the joy of ice cream after being evacuated from the besieged town of Daraya near the capital of war-torn Syria.

His town had endured a strict army-imposed siege since late 2012. This week, under a deal between the government and rebel forces who controlled it, Daraya's thousands of civilians and rebel fighters were all evacuated from the town, devastated by constant bombardment.

Yazan's family and many of the civilians were transferred to Hrajela, a village under government control located around 20 southeast of Daraya.

"Every time Yazan sees sweets, he goes crazy," his mother Amina Kamel told AFP of the youngest of her five children, among the families gathered on Saturday at a reception centre set up by the authorities.

"He's never tasted sweets before. He was over the moon when he saw biscuits," said Kamel, a pale-faced woman, aged 38, wearing an old, black coat.

"Yazan asked me if ice cream was some kind of cake." The four years of life under siege was just as hard on the adults. "All anyone of us had to eat was a portion of soup at sunset and we'd then have to fast until sunset the next day," said Yazan's mother.

"We had no gas or electricity... My heart would break and I'd cry at the sight of my son starving and I had nothing to give him."

Apart from starvation, the evacuees said, fear had been the staple diet of everyday life in Daraya.

Kamel said her family spent most of their time in shelters to avoid the bombs which often rained down on Daraya. Like most other residents, she did not dare send the children to school.

Another mother, Houda, said her children were in awe of vegetables which used to be plentiful supply in the agricultural province of Damascus before the war.

"My children, who are three and five, were very surprised to see tomatoes. It was the first time for them," said the 30-year-old woman. "All we had to survive on was grass."



PHILIPPINES JAILBREAK

IS-linked Maute group inmates freed in raid

AFP, Marawi

Muslim extremists who support the Islamic State group staged a daring jailbreak in the southern Philippines, freeing 23 detainees in the latest in a series of mass escapes, officials said yesterday.

About 50 heavily armed members of the Maute group raided the local jail in the southern city of Marawi on Mindanao island on Saturday and freed eight comrades who were arrested barely a week ago, police said.

Fifteen other detainees, held for other serious offences, also escaped in the raid, said provincial jail warden Acmad Tabao.

EUROPE MIGRANT CRISIS

Germany expects 300,000 this year

AFP, Berlin

Germany expects up to 300,000 asylum seekers to arrive this year, less than one-third of the total during 2015's record influx, the Federal Office for Migrants and Refugees (BAMF) said yesterday.

BAMF chief Frank-Juergen Weise told the Bild am Sonntag newspaper that Germany's healthy economy and improvements to refugee services meant that the country was well-placed to absorb new arrivals, particularly as their numbers have dropped off.

"We are preparing for between 250,000 and 300,000 refugees this year," he said.

"We can ensure optimal services for up to 300,000. Should more people arrive, it would put us under pressure, then we would go into so-called crisis mode. But even then we would not have conditions like last year."