

# UN delays evacuations

Cites lack of security guarantees; Moscow extends truce

AFP, Aleppo

The UN said yesterday that security concerns had forced it to delay planned evacuations from Syria's Aleppo, despite a truce that was largely holding for a second day in the ravaged city.

The unilateral "humanitarian pause" in the Syrian government's Russia-backed assault on the opposition-held east of the city was intended to allow civilians and rebels to leave.

But there was no sign that either civilians or rebels were heeding calls to depart, with Damascus and Moscow accusing opposition fighters of preventing evacuations.

The truce was initially described as lasting just 11 hours, but Russia's defence ministry said yesterday that Moscow would extend the "humanitarian pause" in Aleppo until 1600 GMT today to allow civilians and armed rebels to leave the city.

East Aleppo, which the rebels captured in 2012, has been under siege by the army since mid-July and has faced devastating bombardment by the government and its ally Russia since the launch of an offensive to retake the whole city on September 22.

Nearly 500 people have been killed, more than a quarter of them children, since the assault began. More than 2,000 civilians have been wounded.

The scale of the casualties has prompted outrage in the West, with Washington saying the bombardment amounted to a possible war crime.

Russia announced a halt to its air strikes from Tuesday and the unilateral ceasefire from Thursday.

The Syrian army says it has opened eight corridors across the front line for the more than 250,000 civilians in rebel-held areas to leave but so far almost none have taken up the offer.

"There has been no movement in the corridors in the eastern district. For the moment, we haven't seen any movement of residents or fighters," said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

An AFP correspondent on the government-held side of one crossing in the Bustan al-Qasr district also reported no movement early yesterday.

He said just eight people passed through on Thursday.

## WAR IN SYRIA'S AL



Peshmerga forces stand behind rocks at a site of an attack by Islamic State militants in Kirkuk, Iraq, yesterday. Jihadist gunmen, some of them wearing suicide vests, attacked the Iraqi city, an apparent effort to divert the thousands of troops and militiamen closing in on their Mosul stronghold.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## South Africa to exit war crimes court

AFP, Pretoria

South Africa yesterday announced that it would withdraw from the International Criminal Court, dealing a major blow to a troubled institution set up to try the world's worst crimes.

The decision followed a dispute last year when Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir visited the country for an African Union summit despite facing an ICC arrest warrant over alleged war crimes. South Africa refused to arrest him, saying he had immunity as a head of state.

Justice Minister Michael Masutha told reporters in Pretoria that the court was "inhibiting South Africa's ability to honour its obligations relating to the granting of diplomatic immunity".

"There is a view in Africa that the ICC in choosing who to prosecute has seemingly preferred to target leaders in Africa," Masutha added to AFP.

The ICC, set up in 2002, is often accused of bias against Africa and has also struggled with a lack of cooperation, including from the United States which has signed the court's treaty but never ratified it.

South Africa would be the first country to leave the court, though others could soon follow.

The withdrawal "shows startling disregard for justice from a country long seen as a global leader," Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

Amnesty International said the country was "betraying millions of victims of the gravest human rights violations and undermining the international justice system."

South Africa's failure as an ICC signatory to arrest Bashir led to a wave of condemnation, which was met with an early threat from the government to withdraw from The Hague-based court.

# US runs freedom of navigation operation

REUTERS, Washington

A US navy warship carried out freedom of navigation operation yesterday near islands claimed by China and two other Asian countries in the South China Sea, US officials told Reuters.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Decatur challenged "excessive maritime claims near the Paracel Islands," specifically Triton and Woody Islands, claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam, the US officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The destroyer sailed within waters claimed by China, but not within the 12-nautical-mile territorial limits of the islands, the officials said. The US military defines a freedom-of-navigation operation as one that challenges excessive maritime claims, officials said.

The Pentagon declined to comment. One official said the US destroyer was shadowed by three Chinese vessels and that all interactions were safe. The operation was first reported by Reuters.

It was the fourth challenge that the United States has made to what it considers overreaching maritime claims by China in the South China Sea in

the past year, and the first since May.

China, Washington's main strategic rival in Asia, claims almost the entire South China Sea, through which about \$5 trillion worth of trade passes each year. The United States has criticized Beijing's build-up of military facilities in the sea and expressed concerns they could be used to restrict free movement.

China has a runway on Woody Island, the site of the largest Chinese presence on the Paracels, and has placed surface-to-air missiles there, according to US officials.

In the last three US freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea within the last year, US warships cruised within 12 nautical miles of islands

claimed by Beijing. The actions greatly angered China, which has accused the United States of stirring up trouble there.

The latest operation comes just after the volatile president of the Philippines announced his "separation" from Washington and realignment with China. The Philippines has been a key ally of the United States and a territorial rival of Beijing in the South China Sea.

## SOUTH CHINA SEA



## PTV HEADQUARTERS ATTACK CASE Court directs police to arrest Imran Khan

ANI, Islamabad

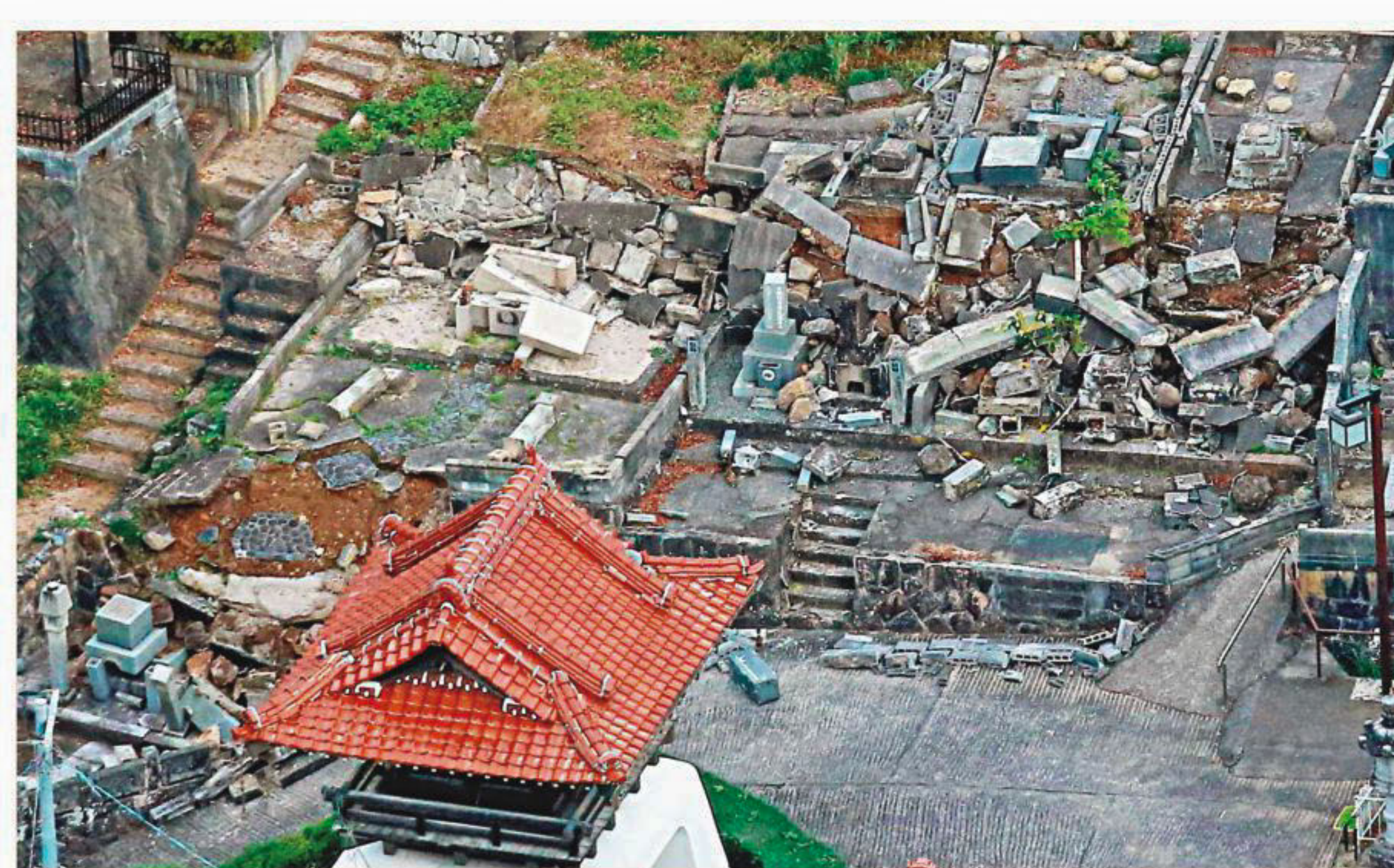
An anti-terrorist court in Islamabad yesterday directed the Pakistan Police to implement its orders with regard to the arrest warrants issued against Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan and Pakistan Awami Tehrik (PAT) chief Tahirul Qadri in the Pakistan Television (PTV) headquarters attack case.

ATC judge Kausar Abbas Zaidi who presided over yesterday's hearing, inquired as to why the police had not been able to submit an implementation report on the court's arrest orders, reports the Dawn.

Expressing displeasure over the police's failure to submit the implementation report, the judge directed the authorities to carry out the arrests of Imran Khan, Tahirul Qadri and 68 others by November 17 and present them in front of the court on the said date.

70 people were booked after a mob of protesters belonging to the PTI and PAT stormed PTV headquarters and forced its staff to take two of the state broadcaster's flagship channels - PTV News and PTV World - off the air on September 1, 2014.

According to eyewitnesses, nearly 400 PTI and PAT workers had stormed the PTV building, across the road from the main entrance to the Pakistan Secretariat.



Houses damaged by an earthquake are seen in Kurayoshi, Tottori prefecture, Japan, yesterday in this photo released by Kyodo. A strong 6.2 magnitude earthquake hit western Japan, severely shaking the region and reportedly causing several injuries, damaging power lines and collapsing a house.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## BREXIT SPEECH AT BRUSSELS EU leaders ignore May

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

EU leaders made Theresa May wait until 1:00am to deliver her message that Britain will not change its mind about Brexit - and gave her just five minutes to speak, before ignoring her speech at a European Council dinner in Brussels.

The Prime Minister was made to wait until "long after the waiters were waiting to clear the dishes away", one observer said yesterday.

No other leader spoke in response to May's brief speech - a united front reflecting the EU's refusal to start exit negotiations until the formal Article 50 notice is invoked, early next year.

Donald Tusk, the European Council President, had urged all the other leaders to stay silent, because formal talks must not begin until that two-year process is underway.

The stance also reflected the reality that the rest of the EU is currently more focused on Russian aggression in Syria and a faltering trade deal with Canada.

In her speech, May told her counterparts face-to-face that Britain would definitely be leaving, after suggestions in Europe that the referendum result may not be final.

And she said Britain expects to be part of EU decision-making until Brexit is completed, rather than be snubbed at any summits and negoti-

ations when key matters are discussed.

Number 10 sources denied the issue had provoked a row, although some senior EU figures are known to be angry that a country wanting to leave still expects a say on the bloc's future.

The triggering of Article 50 - by the end of March - would see Britain leave the EU in the Spring of 2019 - although May has hinted the two-year timeline for talks could be extended.

In Brussels, both the French president and German chancellor warned that if May pursued a "hard Brexit", talks would be hard too. The dinner saw EU leaders enjoy pan-fried scallops, crown of lamb with roast fig and iced vanilla parfait.



## Kyrgyzstan cannot find its constitution

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Politicians in Kyrgyzstan have lost the country's constitution. It emerged during a debate over planned changes to the law that nobody in the central Asian country knew where the original document was.

The most recent version of the constitution was approved by referendum in June 2010, when changes were made to give more authority to parliament and diminish the power of the president.

On 19 October members of the Kyrgyz parliament queried the exact location of the original copy of the document during a debate on whether to allow another referendum to take place in December, which could result in the constitution being amended again.

Some commentators have suggested the mystery of the missing document is a ruse to distract the population from concerns over planned changes to basic law in the country, which has a turbulent recent political past. In spring 2010, parliament was ransacked in a revolution which overthrew president Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

Justice Minister Jyldyz Mambetalieva said her office had a copy of the 2010 constitution, but that the original is held by the presidential administration.

Moldakun Abdylidayev, the presidential administration's liaison to parliament, contradicted her.

He said: "We assumed that it was with the Justice Ministry. Now the minister is confirming that there is no original. That



## UK police arrest teenager on terror offences

REUTERS, London

British police said yesterday that they had arrested a teenager under terrorism laws following the discovery of a "suspicious item" on a London underground train near the Canary Wharf financial district a day earlier.

Officers discharged a stun gun during the arrest of the 19-year-old in north London who was detained on suspicion of preparing terrorism acts, London's Metropolitan Police (MPS) said in a statement.

"Officers are keeping an open mind regarding any possible motive. They are not looking for anyone else in relation to this investigation at this stage," the statement added.

## Venezuela blocks recall

Maduro foes charge they barred from leaving country

REUTERS, Caracas

Venezuelan opposition leaders said yesterday they were banned from leaving Venezuela, adding to outrage over the suspension of their drive for a recall referendum against unpopular socialist leader Nicolas Maduro.

Various opposition figures published a document purportedly from a court in the city of Valencia ordering eight people, including opposition coalition leader Jesus Torrealba and twice-presidential candidate Henrique Capriles, to stay in Venezuela.

"They are wasting their time once again. Wait to hear what we have to say in the next few hours," tweeted Torrealba. "We are the majority, in the street and in congress."

Judicial and government spokesmen did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The purported court document included eight names and gave no reasons for the ban. But it may be related to government allegations the opposition used fraud in an initial signature drive earlier this year to kick-start the referendum process.

That was the reason Venezuela's electoral authority on Thursday suspended the next phase scheduled for next week - to collect around 4 million signatures to trigger the plebiscite - citing court orders.

Furious opposition supporters accused the government of dictatorial tactics.

Students planned a protest march in Caracas, and the Democratic Unity coalition said it would soon announce measures to keep pressing for Maduro's departure.

Some of the harder-line opposition figures called for civil disobedience. "This dictatorship will not grant us anything, we have to achieve change in peace, democracy and - above all - in the street," jailed opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez's Popular Will



## NEWS IN brief

### Ex-Thai PM Yingluck to fight order to pay \$1b

AFP, Bangkok

Ousted Thai premier Yingluck Shinawatra said yesterday she would fight a junta order demanding she personally pay nearly \$1 billion in compensation for a rice policy critics say was riddled with graft. Yingluck, Thailand's first

### Coalition warplanes hit Yemen rebels

AFP, Sanaa

Warplanes from the Saudi-led coalition have hit rebel positions outside the Yemeni capital Sanaa, witnesses said yesterday, after the alliance accused insurgents of breaching a shaky ceasefire. The air strikes late Thursday targeted positions of the Iran-backed Huthi insurgents at Jebel al-Nabishuaib, on the south-

### Pak paramilitary cop slaps woman journo

TNN, New Delhi

A disturbing new video showing a Pakistani paramilitary policeman slap a woman journalist is being widely viewed and shared on social media. "Leave the cameraman alone," the woman tells her aggressor angrily, just moments before he strikes her across the face. The man can be seen upbraiding someone

### Schizophrenia not a mental illness: Pak SC

AFP, Islamabad

Amnesty International yesterday protested a "reprehensible" ruling by Pakistan's Supreme Court that said schizophrenia is "not a permanent mental disorder", in a decision that paves the way for execution of a mentally ill man. Lawyers and rights groups say convicted murderer Imdad Ali, who was diagnosed with schizophre-

### 25 feared dead in raid on migrant boat

AFP, Rome

Up to 25 people were missing, feared drowned, yesterday after men on a Libyan coastguard speedboat attacked a packed migrant dinghy during a rescue operation off the north African state. German NGO Sea-Watch said the tragedy happened after its boat Sea-Watch 2 and a passing oil tanker were sent to help the