

DEADLY ATTACKS SINCE 9/11

Friday's attack on a mosque in Egypt's Sinai, which killed at least 305 people, is among the deadliest since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

US in 2001: 3,000 dead

The deadliest attacks in history take place in the United States on September 11, 2001. Four passenger aircraft are diverted and three deliberately slammed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC. The fourth crashes in Pennsylvania. The attacks are claimed by al-Qaeda and leave around 3,000 people dead.

Iraq in 2007: 400 dead

On August 14, 2007 four suicide truck bombs explode in the villages of Al-Khataniyah and Al-Adnaniyah, which are mainly inhabited by members of the Yazidi community in Iraq's northern province of Nineveh. The simultaneous attacks, blamed on Sunni Islamists, leave more than 400 dead.

Somalia in 2017: 358 dead

A truck bomb in a busy commercial district in northwestern Mogadishu leaves 358 dead in Somalia on October 14, 2017, in what is one of the deadliest ever attacks using vehicles as a weapon. No one claims responsibility, but it is widely seen as being the work of the Shabaab, an insurgent Islamist group aligned with al-Qaeda.



Iraq in 2016: 323 dead

On July 3, 2016 an explosives-packed minibus blows up, killing 323 people in a packed street in central Baghdad. The attack is claimed by the jihadis Islamic State group. The enormous explosion, which sets fire to several buildings and single-storey houses, happens in Karada, a mainly Shia shopping area in the capital which is crowded before the celebrations of the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Egypt in 2015: 224 dead

On October 31, 2015 a Russian jet leaving Egypt crashes in the Sinai peninsula, leaving all 224 people on board dead in Russia's worst air disaster. An Islamic State-linked group claims responsibility for bringing down the plane. Experts do not rule out the possibility of a bomb on board.

Indonesia in 2002: 202 dead

On October 12, 2002 attacks on a bar-restaurant and a discotheque on the island of Bali leave 202 dead, mainly tourists. The attack is carried out by a Jemaah Islamiyah commando linked to al-Qaeda.

PHOTO: AFP



Smoke rises from a blocked flyover as protesters from the Tehreek-i-Labaik Yah Rasool Pakistan (TLYR) religious group clash with police in Islamabad yesterday. Inset, Pakistani volunteers carry an injured protester. Thousands of security forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets as the demonstrators blocked roads and burned police vehicles around the site of the sit-in, which has choked a main highway and virtually paralysed the capital for nearly three weeks. The clashes left at least one person dead, more than 130 injured. The protesters are demanding Pakistan's law minister Zahid Hamid resignation over a hastily-abandoned amendment to the oath that election candidates must swear.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Kurds won't get US arms

Claims Turkey; opposition picks head of unified delegation for UN talks

AFP, Ankara

President Donald Trump told Ankara on Friday that the US will no longer supply arms to the Syrian Kurdish militia Washington has used against the Islamic State, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said.

Trump delivered the message during what the Turkish presidency called a "productive" phone call with his counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the White House hailed as reaffirming a "strategic partnership."

"Mr Trump said he gave a clear order and that after this, weapons would not be supplied to the YPG, essentially he said this nonsense should have been ended earlier," Mevlut Cavusoglu said during a press conference in Ankara.

The White House was less explicit about the US military's intentions towards the YPG.

But it confirmed that Trump had told Erdogan "of pending adjustments to the military support provided to our partners on the ground in Syria, now that the battle of Raqa is complete and we are progressing into a stabilization phase to ensure that ISIS cannot return."

The YPG is the Peoples' Protection Units Kurdish militia in Syria, which the US has seen as the most effective fighting force on the ground against the Islamic State extremist group.

Relations between the US and Turkey have been strained since the administration of former president Barack Obama

SYRIA WAR

over Washington's support for the YPG and the failure to extradite Pennsylvania-based Fethullah Gulen blamed for ordering last year's coup bid.

Meanwhile, Syria's opposition on Friday selected a chief negotiator for a unified delegation to next week's UN-brokered peace talks with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime in Geneva.

Nasr al-Hariri, head of the opposition High Negotiations Committee, was picked to lead a 36-member negotiating team for the talks on November 28, after three days of intense negotiations between various opposition groups in Riyadh.

"Hariri was selected as the head of the delegation today," opposition member Jamal Suleiman told reporters.

The unified delegation will comprise of members from various groups including the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) -- the largest bloc in the opposition -- as well as the Cairo and Moscow-based platforms.

Syria's disparate opposition has been under heavy pressure to unify their ranks and row back on some of their more radical demands after a series of battlefield victories that have given Assad's regime the upper hand.

Several rounds of talks hosted by the United Nations have failed to bring an end to the Syrian conflict, which has killed more than 330,000 people since 2011 and forced millions from their homes.

2 more migrant tragedies

AGENCIES

A 10-year-old Afghan boy was crushed to death Saturday on board an overcrowded boat carrying scores of migrants headed from Turkey to the Greek island of Lesbos, Greek news agency ANA reported.

Panic erupted when the 66 migrants on board the rickety vessel saw a patrol boat from European border agency Frontex approaching, afraid they would be taken back to Turkey, ANA said.

The boy was on the boat with his parents and two younger sisters. When she discovered her son had died in the chaos, his mother tried to end her life by jumping into the sea, only to be rescued by the coastguard.

Despite an EU-Turkey deal in 2016 aimed at stemming the migrant flow to Greece, refugees and migrants desperate for a fresh start continue to arrive on the southern European nation's shores --

with a spike in the numbers since this summer.

The casualties are far lower than in 2015 and 2016, when hundreds of people drowned, including several children.

Despite the relative improvement, tragedy continues to strike.

Afghan boy, 10, dies amid panic on boat

At least 25 dead after boat sinks off Libya



missing after trying to cross to Europe by sea this year, the majority of them between Libya and Italy. The International Organization for Migration said on Friday that since 2000 the Mediterranean had been "by far the world's deadliest border".

FORCED POWER CHANGE IN ZIMBABWE

Military takeover legal, says court

AFP, Harare

A Zimbabwe High Court has ruled that the military takeover that led to Robert Mugabe's ousting was legal, raising immediate concerns about judicial independence under the country's new administration.

Army chiefs put military vehicles on the streets of Harare and placed veteran leader Mugabe, 93, under house arrest, before he resigned on Tuesday.

Many Zimbabweans celebrated the end of Mugabe's 37-year rule, but fear the new government under President Emmerson Mnangagwa could also be an authoritarian regime.

"Actions by the Zimbabwe Defence Forces to stop the usurping of power by those close to former president Robert Mugabe are constitutional," state-run ZBC media reported the court as saying yesterday.

In an apparent reference to Mugabe's wife Grace and her supporters, it said the court ruled Friday that the takeover was "to ensure the non-elected individual do not exercise powers that can only be exercised by (those) elected".

Grace was alleged to have positioned herself to be Mugabe's chosen successor, prompting the military to intervene and usher in their preferred candidate Mnangagwa.

Mnangagwa was sworn in on Friday, vowing sweeping changes and seeking to attract foreign investment to revive the moribund economy.

He used his inauguration speech to pay tribute to the increasingly frail Mugabe, describing him as one of the "founding fathers of our nation".

Alongside another court ruling that Mugabe's earlier sacking of Mnangagwa as vice president was illegal, Human Rights Watch questioned the courts' independence.



PANIC IN LONDON

People run down Oxford Street, London, on Friday. Inset, Armed police patrol near Oxford street. Police rushed to London's busy Oxford Street shopping district on Friday after reports that shots had been fired, sparking fears of a terror incident and leaving 16 people hurt in the panic. Armed officers locked down the area for more than an hour before the Metropolitan Police said it had not found "any trace of any suspects, evidence of shots fired or casualties".

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

BREXIT NEGOTIATIONS

Deal 'possible' but tough: EU

AFP, Brussels

EU President Donald Tusk said Friday that a Brexit deal in December was possible but a "huge challenge" and gave Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May 10 days to act.

Tusk issued the ultimatum after crunch talks with May on the sidelines of a Brussels summit, which the embattled British premier described as taking place in a "very positive atmosphere".

The "absolute" deadline gives May until a meeting with European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker on December 4 to make sufficient progress on the key Brexit divorce issues.

Failing that, the EU leaders will refuse at their next summit on December 14-15 to unlock the next phase of the Brexit negotiations, which are supposed to cover a future trade deal and a transitional arrangement after Britain leaves the EU in March 2019.

"Sufficient progress in Brexit talks at December EUCO (summit) is possible. But still a huge challenge."

Tusk, a former Polish prime minister, said on Twitter after his hourlong meeting with May.

"We need to see progress from UK within 10 days on all issues, including on Ireland."

"PM May agreed to this timeframe," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The EU insists that Britain must tie up three thorny divorce issues -- a multibillion-euro exit bill, the Irish border and the rights of EU nationals living in Britain -- before there can be any talks on future relations.

Trump says he turned down Time's 'Person of the Year'

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Friday said he turned down being named Time's "Person of the Year" after the magazine asked him for an interview and photo shoot but did not confirm he would be chosen.

He tweeted: "Time Magazine called to say that I was PROBABLY going to be named 'Man (Person) of the Year,' like last year, but I would have to agree to an interview and a major photo shoot."

"I said probably is no good and took a pass. Thanks anyway!"

Time responded on its own Twitter account: "The President is incorrect about how we choose Person of the Year. TIME does not comment on our choice until publication, which is December 6."

Former editor Richard Stengel went further, retweeting Trump's tweet with the comment: "Hate to tell you but that PROBABLY means you're NOT Person of the Year."



SAUDI-LED BLOCKADE UN aid workers return to Yemen after weeks

REUTERS, Geneva

Humanitarian aid workers arrived in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa yesterday, after a nearly three week blockade by the Saudi-led military coalition, an official at the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) said.

International aid groups have welcomed the decision to let humanitarian aid in, but said aid flights are not enough to avert a humanitarian crisis. About 7 million people face famine in Yemen and their survival depends on international assistance.

The blockade came after Saudi Arabia intercepted a missile fired toward Riyadh. Iran has denied supplying weapons.

prominently display a framed copy of a fake TIME cover featuring several positive headlines and Trump as its cover.

Since announcing his presidential run, Trump has had an antagonistic relationship with much of the US media, accusing critical outlets of peddling "fake news."

ARGENTINE SUBMARINE TRAGEDY

Probe for 'truth' launched

AFP, Mar Del Plata

President Mauricio Macri on Friday ordered an inquiry to "know the truth" about what happened to Argentina's missing submarine, the San Juan, which disappeared with the loss of its 44 crew.

The 34-year-old submarine had gone through a refit and was "in perfect condition," Macri told reporters at the Argentine navy headquarters.

"My commitment is with the truth," he said, adding the tragedy "will require a serious, in-depth investigation that will yield certainty about what has happened."

Argentina's navy has been fiercely criticized for its handling of the operation since first reporting the submarine overdue at its Mar del Plata base on November 16.

The navy took several days to say that the San Juan had reported a problem with its batteries in its final communication on November 15.

Only on Thursday did the navy confirm there had been an explosion on board, which experts said was likely linked to the battery problem.

"Until we have the complete information, we do not have to look for the guilty, to look for those responsible. First we have to have certainty

of what happened and why it happened," said Macri.

The center-right leader spoke as the search for the San Juan shifted from rescue to recovery on Friday, after navy officials lost hope of finding alive any of the crew, which included the country's first female submarine officer.

Officially the navy has not declared the loss of the crew, but marine experts believe an explosion would have been catastrophic.

Brenda Salva, a friend of crew member Damian Tagliapietra, said she had been told by the commander of the Mar del Plata naval base: "They are all dead."

Argentine press reports on Friday said Macri's center-right government was preparing to sack navy chief Sur as part of a purge of top brass in a country where the military is distrusted.

Depths plummet from 200 meters (650 feet) to more than 3,000 meters on the edge of the Argentine shelf, where the sound of the explosion was picked up by hydro-acoustic sensors used by the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

Experts say the sub would begin to break-up once below depths of around 600 meters.