

# NEWSIN brief

## 52 jihadists killed in Egypt's Sinai

AFP, Cairo  
Egypt's army yesterday said its forces have killed over the past few days 52 jihadists in the Sinai Peninsula where the military is conducting a vast operation against militants. More than 250 jihadists and at least 30 soldiers have been killed since the military launched the operation, according to official figures.

## Head of Syrian regime research centre killed

AFP, Beirut  
The head of a Syrian government research centre fabricating weapons has been killed in an explosion targeting his car. General Aziz Asbar was killed late Saturday along with his driver in the central province of Hama. Asbar headed the research centre in Hama's Masyaf, which was targeted in Israeli air strikes last month.

## Seagal becomes Russian envoy

AFP, Moscow  
Moscow has appointed US actor Steven Seagal as a special envoy, dealing with humanitarian links with the United States, the Russian foreign ministry announced Saturday. Seagal, best known for films such as "Under Siege" and "Above the Law", was granted both Russian and Serbian citizenships in 2016. The Russian ministry said he would not be paid for his envoy role.

## Almost 400 migrants rescued off Spain

REUTERS  
Almost 400 migrants were rescued in the Mediterranean this weekend as they attempted to make the crossing from Morocco to Spain, Spanish rescue services said. Spain, which for the first time in years has overtaken Italy as the preferred destination for refugees, has registered almost 21,000 migrants so far this year.



(From top left, clockwise) Security personnel shield Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro after an explosion during his address marking the National Guard's 81st anniversary; Maduro (C), his wife Cilia Flores (L) and military authorities react immediately after the blast; cameras captured the moment military officers standing at attention in neat lines broke rank and began scattering in all directions; this image showed a soldier with a bleeding head being carried away by his comrades. He was one of seven people injured. Story on page 16.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AP

# 6.9 quake hits Indonesia

## At least three killed

AL JAZEERA ONLINE  
At least three people have been killed after a major earthquake has hit Indonesia's Lombok island, Indonesian officials have said.  
The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the magnitude-6.9 quake struck 3km from Loloan about 31km underground yesterday. The agency registered four aftershocks after the initial tremor.  
The tremor came a week after a magnitude-6.4 quake killed 17, injured more than 160 and damaged hundreds of buildings.  
Authorities issued a tsunami warning, which was later cancelled.  
"Please go to a place with higher ground while remaining calm and not panicking," Dwikorita Karnawati, head of the agency for meteorology, climatology and geophysics, told local TV.  
She later said seawater had entered two villages as high as 10cm and 13cm.  
Many buildings are thought to have been damaged in Lombok's main city Mataram said Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency.  
"They are mostly buildings with weak construction material," Nugroho said.  
The earthquake was felt for several seconds in neighbouring Bali, about 100km away, where people ran out of houses, hotels and restaurants.

# California wildfires spread

## Trump declares 'major emergency' as death toll hits 7

REUTERS, New York  
A seventh person died in a northern California wildfire on Saturday, as a couple of other fast-growing wildfires in the state expanded by more than 25 percent overnight and continued to spread.  
The White House announced on Sunday morning that US President Donald Trump declared that a major disaster exists in California, a move that makes it easier for residents, businesses, cities and counties to gain access to federal money, food aid and other programs.  
"Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster," the White House said.  
More residents were ordered to evacuate their homes this weekend as weary firefighters endured high temperatures and gusting winds.  
The Carr fire, about 162 miles (261 km) north of Sacramento, claimed the life of a power company lineman

Saturday, according to a CBS affiliate.  
The fire, one of the most destructive in California history, had already killed six people, including a great-grandmother and two children, and a firefighter and bulldozer operator.  
Two other blazes collectively called the Mendocino Complex burned in Mendocino, Lake and Colusa counties, about 90 miles north of San Francisco. The River and Ranch fires had grown to cover a total of 229,000 acres (92,600 hectares) by late Saturday, and were considered 32 percent contained.  
Through last week, California fires had torched about 290,000 acres (117,300 hectares), more than double the five-year average over that same period, according to Cal Fire.  
The Mendocino Complex fires cover more than two-thirds the size of sprawling Los Angeles. They have forced the evacuation of more than 20,000 residents and destroyed more than 100 structures.  
Firefighters had managed to contain 41 percent of the Carr blaze by Saturday evening, and authorities were allowing some evacuees to return.



# VINTAGE PLANE CRASH IN SWITZERLAND

## All 20 on board killed

AFP, Fims  
Twenty people died after a vintage World War II aircraft crashed into a Swiss mountainside at the weekend, police said yesterday.  
"The police have the sad certainty that the 20 people aboard perished," police spokeswoman Anita Senti told a news conference.  
There were 11 men and nine women aboard, including an Austrian couple and their son, she said.  
The German-built Junker JU52 HB-HOT aircraft, dating from 1939 and nicknamed "Iron Annie", was a collector's aircraft.  
It crashed into Piz Segnas, a 3,000-metre (10,000-foot) peak in the east of the country on Saturday at an altitude of 2,540 metres on the mountain's western flank, Senti said.  
According to German-language newspaper Blick, the flight had taken off from Ticino in the south of the country and had been due to land at the Duebendorf military airfield near Zurich on Saturday afternoon.  
Swiss reports said the passengers were returning from Locarno, a holiday spot in southern Switzerland on Lake Maggiore, where they had arrived early Friday.  
The 20 Minutes newspaper quoted a

witness who was on the mountainside at the time of the crash.  
"The plane turned 180 degrees to the south and fell to the ground like a stone," the witness said, adding that the debris was scattered over "a very small area" -- indicating that an explosion was unlikely to have been the cause of the crash.  
Andreas Tobler, Grisons canton chief of police said there was "no longer any hope of finding anyone alive." An investigation has been launched into the cause of the accident.  
As this kind of collectors' aircraft is not equipped with "black box" flight data and voice recorders, investigators must rely on eyewitness accounts and analysis of debris.  
The aircraft belongs to JU-Air, a company with links to the Swiss air force, the ATS news agency reported.  
JU-Air CEO Kurt Waldmeier told reporters that the plane had undergone maintenance inspection in July. The company's flight operations were suspended, it said.  
JU-Air says it runs a small fleet of four Junker planes, all built in 1939, which are for hire. Its pilots are ex-military and professional pilots, all of them volunteers.

# 'PLASTIC ATTACKS' ON SUPERMARKETS

## How a protest became a global movement

CNN ONLINE  
When a group of concerned citizens started protesting plastic packaging at supermarkets, they had no idea that their actions would spark a global movement.  
Earlier this year the activists in the UK began organizing "plastic attacks," where customers unwrap their shopping in a supermarket and return single-use packaging to the store.  
"We decided it was time to show supermarkets just how many shoppers were concerned about the amount of plastic packaging on their food," explained Alex Morss, who helped organize some of the first events.  
The average person in the EU generates 31kg of plastic packaging waste each year.  
Globally, as little as 14% of plastic packaging is collected for recycling, according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, and each year, more than 8 million tons of plastic waste makes it into the world's oceans.  
Morss says the movement snowballed when videos of the first plastic attacks started being shared on social media. Soon, like-minded people from around the world began contacting the organisers, asking how to hold their own protests.  
Now there have been well over 100 plastic attacks around the world, mostly in Europe, but also in Hong Kong, South Korea, Canada, Peru and the United States.  
In Belgium, Christophe Steyaert was one of those inspired by the UK events. He now runs the Plastic Attack Global Facebook page, and advises groups around the world. At the



moment, he says he's helping to organize attacks in Belgium, Colombia and Spain.  
Steyaert says that the biggest attacks in Belgium have drawn hundreds of people.  
"We're just regular people who are very aware of the problem and want to do something," he said "and the best way to do something is to change yourself and spread the word that it's not so difficult to change."  
Morss, a journalist, ecologist and educator, says the protestors have generally been welcomed by supermarkets, and staff are often supportive of their aims. She says they always get permission from the supermarkets. The unwanted packaging is put into shopping trolleys and recycled by the stores where possible.  
"We're not a bunch of anarchists," says Morss. "We're very polite, well-mannered people of all ages, from teens to people in their 80s and 90s."  
Morss adds: "Plastic should not be used to justify the argument that it enables food to be flown further around the world -- why not buy local and reduce your carbon footprint that way?"

# AFGHANISTAN UNREST

## Taliban blast kills 3 Nato soldiers

AFP, Kabul  
A suicide bombing claimed by the Taliban killed three Czech soldiers on patrol in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, the deadliest assault on Nato troops for many months.  
A US member of the patrol and two Afghan soldiers were wounded, Nato added.  
The attack by a lone bomber on foot happened at 6:00 am in the city of Charikar in Parwan province 60 kilometres (37 miles) north of Kabul, said provincial governor's spokesman Wahida Shahkar.  
The Taliban in a statement claimed responsibility, saying they killed or wounded eight American soldiers in a "tactical explosion".



Israelis from the Druze minority together with others take part in a rally to protest against Jewish nation-state law in Rabin square in Tel Aviv, Israel. Inset, A man holds a banner during the protest. Tens of thousands of Israeli Druze and their supporters rallied in central Tel Aviv on Saturday to protest the new law they say makes them second-class citizens, an AFP reporter said. The law, which was passed last month and is part of Israel's so-called basic laws, a de facto constitution, proclaims the country the nation state of the Jewish people.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

# PML-N finds it hard to win PPP support for forming Punjab govt

DAWN ONLINE  
The PML-N which has taken PPP on board for fielding joint candidates for the slots of prime minister, speaker and deputy speaker in the Centre (the National Assembly of Pakistan) is finding it hard to cut the same arrangement with the party in Punjab.  
"We are in talks with the PML-N, but we have decided in principle to sit in the opposition in the Punjab Assembly," former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani of the PPP told Dawn on Saturday.  
Gilani is heading a six-member PPP committee formed to contact the other parties for formation of governments in the Centre and Punjab.  
He said the PPP succeeded in persuading other parties to join to the parliament as its prime objective was to strengthen democracy. "We are not keen to form the government. Despite concerns over the transparency of the polls, we do not want to let democracy weaken. During talks with other parties like the PML-N we did not demand anything. In the Punjab Assembly, where the PPP has six seats, we did not prefer to go in some kind of arrangement with any party and decided to sit in the opposition," the former

premier said.  
Interestingly in the Centre, the PPP, the PML-N, the MMA, the ANP and other parties have decided to field candidates jointly for the slots of prime minister, speaker and deputy speaker of the National Assembly. According to the decision unanimously taken by these parties, the candidate for prime minister office will be from the PML-N, speaker from the PPP and deputy speaker from the MMA.  
The PML-N, which is facing disappointment in wooing the independent MPAs-elect in Punjab, with no support of the PPP, has virtually bleak chances to form government in the all important state. The PTI claims to have achieved the required number to form the government in Punjab.  
So far not a single independent MPA-elect out of 28 announced joining the PML-N, showing its complete failure in this respect.  
The PML-N emerged as the largest party in Punjab with 129 seats, followed by the PTI's 123, PML-Q eight, PPP six and 28 independents in the directly elected house of 297. With the addition of 66 women on reserved seats and eight of minorities, at least 185 members are required to form government in the province.

PPP has decided to sit in the opposition in Punjab Assembly: ex-PM Gilani

# Melania backs NBA star after president's insults

AFP, Washington  
After Donald Trump sniped back at LeBron James' suggestion that he fuels American racial divides, support has flooded in for the NBA great -- including from the US president's own wife, Melania.  
In an interview on Tuesday -- also broadcast late Friday -- Los Angeles Lakers player and philanthropist James told CNN he believed Trump "is kind of trying to divide us."  
"He's kind of used sport to... divide us and that's something I can't relate to, because I know that sport was the first time I ever was around someone white. You know?" said James, who on Monday opened an elementary school for at-risk youth in his native Akron, Ohio.  
For the rest of the week, Trump was uncharacteristically silent -- until Friday night, when he finally shot back.  
"Lebron James was just interviewed by the dumbest man on television, (CNN presenter) Don Lemon. He made Lebron look smart, which isn't easy to do," the president tweeted.  
His comment sparked huge reaction from James' supporters -- but the most surprising came from First Lady Melania Trump, whose communications director issued a statement that appeared to break ranks with the president.  
Stephanie Grisham was quoted by CNN as saying James appeared to be "working to do good things on behalf of our next generation."  
"Just as she always has, the First Lady encourages everyone to have an open dialogue about issues facing children today," she said.  
Grisham added the first lady "would be open to visiting" James' new school.