

Brexit talks in deadlock

AGENCIES

European leaders have dropped plans for a special November summit to complete a Brexit deal because of a lack of progress in negotiations, and have ramped up preparations for a chaotic split.

British Prime Minister Theresa May offered "nothing new" in a presentation to EU leaders at a critical meeting in Brussels, Belgium, the head of the European Parliament said Wednesday.

EU leaders ordered negotiations to continue, and left open the possibility that a November summit could yet take place if a breakthrough can be reached, two EU sources told CNN. But they also ordered officials to intensify their preparations for a "no-deal" scenario.

May confirmed yesterday she was open to extending a Brexit transition period if it helped unblock negotiations, but the proposal came under fire from all sides in Britain's fractious political landscape.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier suggested the extension as a way of breaking the deadlock on how to keep Britain's border with Ireland open after Brexit, which is holding up the whole divorce agreement.

May emphasised she did not expect the extension to be needed beyond the current date of December 2020.

But hardcore Brexit backers and pro-EU loyalists alike



EU 'drops plan' for November summit citing no progress

UK PM's longer transition period plan draws cross-party rebuke at home

grounded on the premier on the extension plan.

Several heavyweight Brexiters in May's governing Conservative Party wrote a joint open letter, warning May she would never be forgiven if Brexit results in "surrender".

The letter was signed by former foreign secretary Boris Johnson and ex-Brexit secretary David Davis -- their first joint intervention after resigning in July over May's Brexit blueprint, which would keep Britain close to the EU on trade.

Britain is due to leave the EU in March 2019.

Conservative "soft Brexit" backer Nick Boles summed up the situation. "She is losing the confidence now of colleagues of all shades of opinion," he told BBC radio.

May's critics are not limited to her own party or hardcore Brexiters, with pro-EU voices weighing in.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, from the main opposition Labour Party, denounced where May's negotiation was leading the country.

The knives were also out in the press.

The Sun, Britain's Brexit-backing and biggest-selling newspaper, said the latest EU "ruse is an insult she must repel".

"The proposal to keep us shackled to the EU for another year beyond the transition period is an outrageous non-starter," the tabloid said.



Honduran migrants take part in a caravan towards the United States in Chiquimula, Guatemala, on Wednesday. A migrant caravan set out on October 13 from the impoverished, violence-plagued country and was headed north on the long journey through Guatemala and Mexico to the US border. President Donald Trump warned Honduras he will cut millions of dollars in aid if the group of about 2,000 migrants is allowed to reach the United States. He yesterday threatened to close US border with Mexico.

PHOTO: AFP

Khashoggi pleads for free press in Arab world in his 'last piece'

AFP, Washington

Two weeks after he disappeared, The Washington Post on Wednesday published what it said appears to be Jamal Khashoggi's final column, in which the missing Saudi journalist writes of the importance of a free press in the Arab world.

"The Arab world is facing its own version of an Iron Curtain, imposed not by external actors but through domestic forces vying for power," Khashoggi writes.

"The Arab world needs a modern version of the old transnational media so citizens can be informed about global events. More important, we need to provide a platform for Arab voices," Khashoggi writes.

"Through the creation of an independent international forum, isolated from the influence of nationalist governments spreading hate through propaganda, ordinary people in the Arab world would be able to address the struc-

tural problems their societies face."

The ultimate fate of Khashoggi -- whose writings have been critical of powerful Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman -- is still unknown, but leaks by anonymous Turkish officials have painted a picture of him allegedly meeting a grisly demise in the consulate at the hands of Saudi agents. He disappeared entering Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul on October 2.

In the introduction to Khashoggi's column the Post's Global Opinions editor Karen Attiah said the newspaper held off on publishing it in the hopes that he would return.

"Now I have to accept: That is not going to happen. This is the last piece of his I will edit for The Post," Attiah wrote.

"This column perfectly captures his commitment and passion for freedom in the Arab world. A freedom he apparently gave his life for."



CO2 emissions to rise in 2018

AFP, Paris

Energy sector carbon emissions will rise in 2018 after hitting record levels the year before, dimming prospects for meeting Paris climate treaty goals, the head of the International Energy Agency (IEA) said Wednesday.

The energy sector accounts for 80 percent of global CO2 emissions, with most of the rest caused by deforestation and agriculture, so its performance is key to efforts to rein in rising world temperatures.

"I'm sorry, I have very bad news for you," IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol told guests at a diplomatic function hosted by the Polish embassy in Paris.

"Emissions this year will increase once again, and we're going to have the COP meeting when global emissions reach a record high," he said, referring to the December UN climate summit in Katowice, Poland.

After remaining flat for three years, total global CO2 emissions in 2017 rose by 1.4 percent, dashing hopes that they had peaked.

The meeting in Katowice is tasked with finalising the "operating manual" for the 195-nation Paris Agreement, which enters into force in 2020 and calls for capping global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), and at 1.5 C if possible.

"The chances of meeting such ambitious targets, in my view, are becoming weaker and weaker every year, every month," Birol told invitees.

UN's Syria envoy to step down

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations envoy for Syria on Wednesday announced he will step down at the end of November after more than four years in the key post as UN efforts to end the seven-year war show no sign of a breakthrough.

"I will myself be moving on as of the last week of November," Staffan de Mistura told the UN Security Council during a meeting on the crisis in Syria.

The Italian-Swedish diplomat, who is the UN's third Syria envoy in six years, said he was leaving for "purely personal reasons," citing the need to give his family "a little bit of attention" after a long stint in the demanding post.

De Mistura will be travelling to Damascus next week to push for the creation of a committee to agree on a



post-war constitution for Syria that would pave the way to elections.

The Syria government is objecting to the UN-led effort to include civil society representatives, religious and tribal leaders, experts and women on the panel, the envoy said.

Meanwhile, the head of the humanitarian taskforce for the war-ravaged country yesterday said he would also resign next month.

"I am also leaving at the end of November," Jan Egeland told reporters in Geneva.

De Mistura was appointed UN envoy for Syria in July 2014 after veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi resigned following the failure of peace talks in Geneva.

Brahimi spent two years in the position, stepping in after former UN chief Kofi Annan quit just six months into the role. Annan had described the Syria envoy's job as "mission impossible."

TEXAS HATE CRIME

Arsonist gets 24 yrs in jail

AFP, Chicago

An arsonist convicted of burning down a Texas mosque last year was sentenced Wednesday to more than 24 years in prison for a crime prosecutors said was motivated by hate.

Marq Perez had been found guilty in July of a hate crime and felony arson in the January 2017 burning of the Victoria Islamic Center in Southeast Texas.

The 26-year-old had broken into the mosque a week before the arson in order to conduct reconnaissance, the Department of Justice (DOJ) said in a statement citing trial testimony.

A witness testified that on the night of the crime Perez used a lighter to set papers on fire, and described "how excited" Perez was upon seeing the mosque in flames just minutes later, DOJ said.

The witness testified that Perez wanted to "send a message," it said, adding that others gave testimony about the suspect's use of anti-Muslim slurs.

"Mr Perez sought to provoke terror," FBI Agent Edward Michel said in a statement.

"No one in this country should feel afraid to openly practice their religion or express their beliefs."

The crime elicited an outpouring of support from around the world for the Islamic community in the city of Victoria, Texas.

An online GoFundMe campaign raised more than \$1 million from donors in 90 countries to rebuild the mosque. It reopened in September.

"We're tremendously humbled and overwhelmed by the emotional and financial support you have given and continue to give us throughout this calamity," the mosque said on its



People lay flowers for the victims during a church service in Kerch, Crimea, yesterday, after a student opened fire at a college in the Crimea city of Kerch. Inset, A woman cries during the church service.

PHOTO: AFP

CRIMEA COLLEGE CARNAGE

Gunman was bullied

Claims ex-girlfriend; Putin said shooting curse of globalisation

AFP, Moscow

The teenager who killed at least 20 people and himself in a school massacre that has rocked Russian-annexed Crimea has spoken about taking revenge for bullying, his ex-girlfriend told Russian media yesterday as investigators rushed to establish the motives of the shooter.

"He would say that he lost trust in people when his classmates began humiliating him for not being like everyone else," a 15-year-old named as Zlata told the Kremlin-funded RT television of Vladislav Roslyakov.

The 18-year-old had spoken to her about taking revenge for this bullying, RT reported Zlata as saying.

"He didn't want to live" because of it, said the girl, who broke up with Roslyakov at an unspecified time before the killing.

Russian investigators and residents of the peninsula are looking to understand what motivated the killer and how he was able to carry out a massacre of this scale.

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the mass school shooting was the result of "globalisation" and the continuation of an American trend.

"It's a result of globalisation. On social media, on the internet, we see that there is a whole community that has been created. Everything started with the tragic events in schools in the US," he said at a forum in Sochi.

EXTRATERRITORIAL ABDUCTIONS BY STATES

UN experts deeply concerned by 'new, worrisome practice'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The world is witnessing a new and very worrying practice of extraterritorial abductions by states, a UN expert told the UN General Assembly yesterday, highlighting the case of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Bernard Duhaime, Chair of the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances, expressed outrage at the actions of states who continue to resort to enforced disappearance.

"Whether it is used to repress political dissent, combat organised crime, or allegedly fight terrorism, when resorting to enforced disappearance States are actually perpetrating a crime and an offence to human dignity," he said.

"Now we are witnessing with utmost concern a new and very worrisome practice of the extraterritorial abductions of individuals in foreign countries through undercover operations, as also highlighted in our latest annual report.

"These abductions occur with or without the acquiescence of the host state, and while in most cases the victims reappear in detention after a short period, in other cases they remain disappeared -- as in the recent shocking case of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi," he said, reiterating a call for an independent international investigation into the events, and the identification and prosecution of the perpetrators.

An interim report on standards and public policies for an effective investigation was presented by the Working Group to the Human Rights Council, which will be followed by an in-depth study on the practical implementation of the obligation to investigate enforced disappearances.

The Working Group invited all states, as well as families of the disappeared, civil society, UN mechanisms or agencies and other interested stakeholders to provide any relevant inputs that may contribute to the study.

The Trump effect

Political newcomers jump into US electoral fray

AFP, Washington

Hundreds of everyday Americans with zero political experience are jumping into the fray for the mid-term congressional elections in a country that has become ever more polarized since Donald Trump was elected president in 2016.

AFP has spoken to a dozen or so of these people who have moved past the party-primary stage and will fight for a seat in Congress on November 6, when all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and a third of the 100-member Senate are up for grabs, as are myriad local positions.

"We have people in Congress right now who ... don't know what it's like" to be without food or proper health care, said Deb Haaland, 57, a Democrat running for a House seat and the distinction of becoming the first Native American woman to serve in Congress.

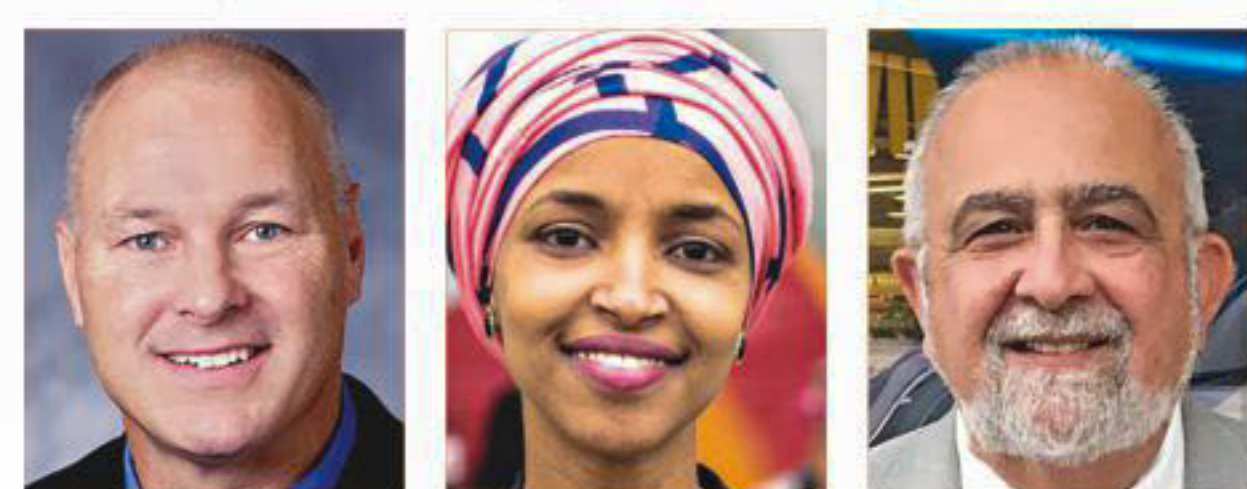
Haaland has been active in local politics in her native New Mexico. But she says it was Trump's surprise win that got her interested in joining politics at the national level.

That sentiment is found among many new Democratic hopefuls, including a record number of women, who have left their mark on the American political scene since their sometimes shock victories in the primaries.

A former refugee, Ilhan Omar, 36, could become the first Somali-American woman in the House and one of its first Muslim women.

Ayanna Pressley, a 40-something African-American woman who is trying to move from local politics in Boston to a seat in Washington, promises to be "part of a movement that brings change and a new perspective to Washington."

Military veteran MJ Hegar is also running for a seat in the



Pete Stauber House. She is doing so in a district in heavily Republican Texas.

But Trump's arrival in the White House did not move just Democrats to jump into politics but Republicans, too.

Pete Stauber, who worked as a policeman for 22 years, is hoping to win a House seat in Democratic Minnesota to keep what he calls Trump's pro-growth and pro-jobs agenda going.

He said he is motivated by "my passion for public service, as a police officer, my wife's in the military."

Then there's "Mr. Seafood": fish monger Johnny Nalbandian is also running in deeply Democratic California in the hope of winning a seat in the House.

"I saw the once great beautiful California go to deterioration. I saw California going towards socialism. I do not want California to be another Venezuela," he said.

He said he loves what Trump is doing.

"I think it's time for the philosophers, the career politicians and all the rest to leave Washington and let business people take over."