

11 killed in Jordan floods

AFP, Amman

Flash floods killed 11 people in Jordan and forced nearly 4,000 tourists to flee the famed ancient desert city of Petra, emergency services said yesterday.

Search teams were scouring valleys near the historic hill town of Madaba for two young girls still missing after Friday's floods, civil defence spokesman Iyad Amru told state television in an update.

Five people have already been confirmed dead in the area southwest of the capital Amman after torrential rains swept the south of the kingdom.

To the east, three people were killed near Dabaa on the Desert Highway, one of Jordan's three main north-south arteries, while one was killed near Maan in the south.

The Jordanian army deployed helicopters and all-terrain vehicles to help with the search and rescue operation. A rescuer was also among the dead, the civil defence spokesman said.

State television said the waters had reached as high as four metres (13 feet) in parts of the red-rock ravine city of Petra and the adjacent Wadi Musa desert.



CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

(From top left, clockwise) An aerial view showing the Woolsey Fire in Malibu, California; a woman reacts to the Woolsey Fire; firefighters battle against a burning house in Paradise, north of Sacramento, California; and a helicopter is seen dousing water on flames in a portion of Griffith Park in Los Angeles, California. Two monster wildfires, including the most destructive in California's history, burned out of control yesterday. All pictures were taken on Friday.



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

SOMALIA BLASTS

Death toll hits 41

AFP, Mogadishu

The death toll from a string of car bombings near a popular hotel in the Somali capital Mogadishu has jumped to at least 41, police said yesterday.

Friday's attack was the latest in a wave of bombings by Al-Shabaab, an al-Qaeda affiliate which has been fighting to overthrow the internationally-backed Somali government for over a decade.

Twin car bombs exploded within moments of each other, followed by gunfire and a third blast, sending thick plumes of black smoke into the sky.

The blasts occurred near the Sahafi hotel and Criminal Investigation Division (CID) police headquarters.

Parliament speaker Mohamed Mursal said the attackers deliberately targeted civilians.

"These terrorists have massacred civilians at a time when people were out to spend time during the weekend. I call on the Somali people to stand together against those killers," he told reporters.

Police official Ibrahim Mohamed said information received from various hospitals indicated that the number of dead had reached 41, with another 106 wounded.

"Most of these people were civilians and nearly 20 of them died in minibuses that were passing by the road when the blast occurred," he added.

Another security official, Abdurahman Osman, told AFP that nearly 50 had been confirmed dead so far, although the final number was not yet known.

Erdogan shares Khashoggi tapes

AGENCIES

Turkey has shared recordings linked to the murder last month of journalist Jamal Khashoggi with Riyadh, Washington and other capitals, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday.

"We gave them the recordings, we gave them to Saudi Arabia, we gave them to Washington, to the Germans, to the French, to the British," he said in a televised speech.

"They listened to the conversations which took place here, they know," he said, but added that they were not accompanied by any written documents.

Khashoggi was last seen entering the consulate on October 2 to obtain documents for his forthcoming marriage. After repeated denials, Saudi Arabia finally admitted the 59-year-old had been murdered at the mission in a "rogue" operation.

Turkish pro-government daily Sabah earlier yesterday reported Khashoggi's killers poured the remains of the

Report says the Saudi journo's corpse went down the drains

Turkey 'end search' for Khashoggi's body



insider-turned-critic of Riyadh down the drain after dissolving him in acid.

Samples taken from the consulate drains showed traces of acid, Sabah said without quoting sources for its story.

Meanwhile, sources told Al Jazeera yesterday that Turkish police ended the search for Khashoggi's body, but that the criminal investigation into the Saudi journalist's murder will continue.

Erdogan has accused the "highest levels" of the Saudi government of ordering the hit. Some officials have pointed the finger at the all-powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and some analysts say Ankara is keen to have the heir sidelined from the nexus of power in Riyadh.

Some Turkish media and officials had said for weeks that Ankara possessed an audio recording of the murder and had shared it with CIA head Gina Haspel when she visited Turkey late last month. But the existence of such a recording had not been officially confirmed.

Khashoggi's body has not been found, more than a month after the Washington Post columnist was killed. Yasin Aktay, an advisor to Erdogan, suggested last week that the body may have been dissolved.

AFP, Paradise

Firefighters in California yesterday battled raging blazes at both ends of the state that have left at least nine people dead and thousands of homes destroyed -- but there was little hope of containing the flames anytime soon.

More than 250,000 people have been ordered to evacuate a wide area near the state capital Sacramento and, in southern California, the Hollywood resort town of Malibu.

So far, all nine fatalities were reported in the town of Paradise, in Butte County, where more than 6,700 buildings -- most of them residences -- have been consumed by the late-season inferno, which is now California's most destructive

fire on record.

Governor-elect Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency to provide assistance to the hardest-hit areas in the fire-prone state.

The fast-moving blaze in the north, which authorities have named the "Camp Fire," broke out early Thursday.

Fanned by strong winds, it has so far scorched 100,000 acres and is 20 percent contained, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said yesterday. So far, more than 3,200 firefighters have been deployed.

They estimate they will need three weeks to fully contain the blaze.

Local power authorities have told state officials an outage occurred near the spot where the fire erupted,

The Sacramento Bee reported, but there is still no official cause of the Camp blaze.

In southern California, more wildfires burned including one just north of Los Angeles and another in Ventura County near Thousand Oaks, where a Marine Corps veteran shot dead 12 people in a country music bar on Wednesday.

Authorities said some 200,000 people are under mandatory evacuation orders, including the entire city of Malibu.

The "Woolsey Fire" had consumed around 35,000 acres and was so far not contained, the Ventura County Fire Department said, adding that evacuation orders were issued for some 88,000 homes in

the county and neighboring Los Angeles County.

Malibu is one of the most in-demand locations in California for stars seeking privacy and luxury.

Reality TV star Kim Kardashian West, who lives just north of coastal Malibu, revealed she was forced to flee her home. Actor Martin Sheen, briefly reported missing by his actor son Charlie, was also forced to evacuate.

In Paradise, the flames destroyed hundreds of homes, a hospital, a gas station, several restaurants and numerous vehicles, officials said.

Mandatory evacuation orders were issued for more than 52,000 people in the scenic area in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains.

US President Donald Trump (L) speaks with French president Emmanuel Macron prior to their meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, yesterday, on the sidelines of commemorations marking the 100th anniversary of the 11 November 1918 armistice, ending World War I.



PHOTO: AFP



WWI ARMISTICE CENTENARY

German Chancellor Angela Merkel (L) and French President Emmanuel Macron embrace as they take part in a French-German ceremony in the clearing of Rethondes (the Glade of the Armistice) in Compiègne, northern France, yesterday, as part of commemorations marking the 100th anniversary of the 11 November 1918 armistice, ending World War I.

PHOTO: AFP

US MAIL BOMB SCARE

Suspect indicted on 30 counts

AFP, New York

US prosecutors in New York on Friday indicted the Florida man accused of sending pipe bombs to critics of Donald Trump with crimes that carry a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The 56-year-old, who lived in a van plastered with pro-Trump and anti-Democrat stickers before his October 26 arrest, was previously hit with a five-count complaint in the sunshine state.

The registered Republican, who has a criminal history and reported past as a stripper, was subsequently flown to New York and appeared in a Manhattan court earlier this week, before the 30-count indictment was unveiled.

Cesar Sayoc now stands accused of mailing 16 explosive devices, despite law enforcement officials previously alleging that he sent 11 critics of the US president a total of 13 different devices.

The charges include five counts of use of a weapon of mass destruction for each pipe bomb mailed to and intercepted in the New York area, targeting billionaire liberal donor George Soros, former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, actor Robert de Niro, former CIA director John Brennan and former intelligence chief James Clapper.

Outside the New York area, Sayoc is also accused of sending other pipe bombs to former president Barack Obama, former vice president Joe Biden and others.

Macron, Trump in show of unity after defence row

Tusk lashes out at US leader's Europe stance

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron sought to defuse a row with US counterpart Donald Trump yesterday, hailing the "great solidarity" between their countries after Trump blasted his proposals for a European army.

The two leaders held talks at the presidential palace in Paris ahead of World War I commemorations taking place in the shadow of a new nationalist surge worldwide.

Their body language was less warm than during Trump's last trip to Paris in July 2017 and Macron's visit to the White House in April, underscoring a general cooling in relations which were further strained by a late-night tweet by Trump on defence.

Defending his call during the week for a European army, Macron said: "It is unfair to have European security being assured by the US".

Trump's visit, which kickstarts two days of events marking the centenary of the end of World War I today, had looked set to be tumultuous after he fired off a tweet on arrival in Paris late Friday berating Macron's

calls for a European army.

"President Macron of France has just suggested that Europe build its own military in order to protect itself from the US, China and Russia," the US president tweeted, referring to remarks made by Macron three days earlier. "Very insulting, but perhaps Europe should first pay its fair share of Nato, which the US subsidizes greatly!" he added.

Trump appeared particularly irked by the French leader's referral to the US alongside China and Russia as national security threats.

Meanwhile, European Union chief Donald Tusk yesterday accused Trump of being averse to a "strong and united" Europe.

"For the first time in history we have an American administration that is, to put it mildly, not enthusiastic about a united and strong Europe," Tusk said in a speech in his native Poland.

"I'm speaking about facts, not propaganda," Tusk -- a possible future Polish president -- said on the eve of celebrations to mark Poland's 100th anniversary of independence.