

# Yemen rivals agree to Hodeida truce

Defying Trump, US Senate advances measure to end support for Saudis

AFP, Rimbo

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday announced a series of breakthroughs in talks with rivals in the Yemen conflict, including a ceasefire for a vital port.

In a highly symbolic gesture on the seventh and final day of the UN-brokered peace talks in Sweden, Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled al-Yamani and rebel negotiator Mohammed Abdelsalam shook hands to loud applause.

However, a number of issues remain unresolved and a new round of talks with take place at the end of January, Guterres said.

The conflict has triggered what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 14 million Yemenis now at the brink of mass starvation.

Guterres, who flew in to Sweden late Wednesday, announced that the government and Huthi rebels had agreed on a ceasefire in the port of Hodeida, the main entry point for imported food and aid.

"There is a ceasefire declared for the whole governorate of Hodeida in the agreement and there will be both from the city and the harbour a withdrawal of all forces," he told reporters.

Guterres said the United Nations would play a "leading role" in monitoring the Red Sea port, which is currently controlled by the rebels, and facilitate aid access to the civilian population.

In addition, the rivals have reached a "mutual understanding" on Yemen's third city of Taiz, the scene of some of the most intense battles in the conflict.

But no deal has been reached on the future of the airport in the capital Sanaa or on economic measures that are vital to help the country's population.

The January talks will focus on a framework for negotiations on a political process, which Guterres said was the only solution to the conflict.

Meanwhile, eleven of Trump's fellow Republicans joined Democrats to provide the 60 votes needed to advance the war powers resolution in the Republican-led chamber. The vote paved the way for

**YEMEN PEACE TALKS**

Deals struck on Taiz, prisoner swap,

Sanaa airport remains a stumbling block

New round of talks at the end of Jan

debate and a vote on US involvement in a conflict that has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, many of them young children and left millions more at risk of starvation and death by disease.

"If you want to buy our weapons, there are certain things you have to accept. How you use them matters," Republican Senator Lindsey Graham told a news conference. "The individual, the crown prince, is so toxic, so tainted, so flawed, that I can't ever see myself doing business with Saudi Arabia unless there's a change there," said Graham, generally a close Trump ally in the Senate.



Yemen's foreign minister Khaled al-Yamani (L) and rebel negotiator Mohammed Abdelsalam (R) shake hands in presence of UN chief Antonio Guterres during peace talks in Sweden, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Firefighters and medics try to rescue victims after a high-speed train crashed into a locomotive in Ankara, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## ANKARA TRAIN CRASH

### 9 killed, 47 hurt

AFP, Ankara

Nine people were killed and nearly 50 injured after a high-speed train crashed into a locomotive in the Turkish capital yesterday, officials said.

Transport Minister Cahit Turhan told reporters in televised remarks that three of those killed were operators of the train.

One of the victims died in hospital, he added. Turhan added that 47 people were injured and were in hospital for treatment.

The fast train had been on its way from Ankara's main station to the central province of Konya and according to Hurriyet daily, there were 206 passengers on board.

"This morning there was an accident after the 6.30 high-speed train to Konya hit a locomotive tasked with checking rails on the same route," Sahin told reporters in televised remarks.

Turhan said the accident took place six minutes after the train left Ankara as it entered the Marsandiz station.

The governor said search and rescue efforts continued as "technical investigations" were underway to find out exactly what caused the crash in Yenimahalle district.

The Ankara to Konya high-speed route was launched in 2011 and was followed in 2014 with a high-speed link between Ankara and Istanbul.

The accident comes after another rail disaster in July this year when 24 people were killed and hundreds more injured after a train derailed in Tekirdag province, northwest Turkey, due to ground erosion following heavy rains.

Turkey's worst rail disaster in recent history was in July 2004 when 41 people were killed and 80 injured after a high-speed train derailed in the northwestern province of Sakarya.

## 'Lame duck for Christmas'

### UK press on May's 'stay of execution'

AFP, London

Britain's partisan newspapers mostly agreed yesterday that Prime Minister Theresa May has been damaged and faces all-but-impossible Brexit hurdles despite winning her party's confidence vote.

"It's lame duck for Christmas," the opposition Labour party-backing Daily Mirror wrote on its front page.

The more independent-minded i commuter newspaper said May received a "stay of execution".

And the Brexit-support The Sun said the "coup plot may lead to (a) historic breakup of the Tory party".

May won the backing of 200 Conservative party MPs in a secret ballot on Wednesday.

But 117 voted against her -- a margin that underscored the extent of the opposition from her own ranks to the draft withdrawal agreement May struck with EU leaders last month.

The no-confidence vote was initiated by staunchly anti-EU MPs in May's party. Her deal is also opposed by Labour and smaller opposition parties in parliament that want closer ties with Brussels.

The scale of the resistance -- and May's promise to her party on Wednesday to not contest the 2022 election -- made newspapers question the extent of the British leader's victory.

"Tory coup fails. But scale of rebellion damages May," said the left-wing The Guardian.

"Theresa May scrapes home," said The Times. The traditionally right-wing paper said five minister were now urging May to let parliament "hold a series of 'indicative' votes on every conceivable option" of Brexit.

May pulled a vote scheduled for Tuesday on the draft agreed last month with her 27 EU counterparts because of its certain defeat.

She heads back to Brussels on Thursday in a long-shot bid to wrest concessions that could win her some additional votes.

EU leaders refuse to renegotiate the actual draft but seem willing to offer May non-binding assurances on the main dispute involving measures to prevent the return of a hard border with Ireland.

May has promised to re-submit her Brexit deal for a vote in the House of Commons by



## COP24: UN CLIMATE TALKS

### Rights protection hangs in balance

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, Katowice

Top officials and advocates are pushing at UN talks in Poland to ensure governments and businesses respect human rights when working to build a green future under the Paris climate pact.

The climate change conference, due to end today, is struggling to agree rules for efforts to keep global temperature rise "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times, a goal enshrined in the 2015 Paris accord.

One sticking point is how obligations on human rights should be incorporated into the "rule book" for implementing the Paris deal.

"Climate change already has affected the lives of so many people - the right to food because of terrible droughts, the right to live in proper ways," UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said at the talks.

Most references to human rights have been stripped out of the text now under negotiation in Katowice, experts said.

However, it remains in clauses relating to carbon markets, although Egypt, on behalf of the Arab Group of nations, and Saudi Arabia have opposed its inclusion, they added.

The wording is key to avoid a repeat of previous rights abuses linked to carbon credits for renewable energy projects under the Kyoto Protocol, said Sebastien Duyck, a senior attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL).

The Kyoto Protocol is a treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which expires in 2020 when the Paris Agreement takes off.

In Panama, the construction of a hydroelectric dam had been eligible to receive carbon credits under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), a scheme for rich nations to offset their emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, despite displacing indigenous people, CIEL said. Similar problems with other CDM projects have been reported in countries including Honduras, Guatemala and Kenya.

"I think the bigger issue with climate change is millions are being displaced - not because of projects but because of climate change - and so we should focus on climate change as a violation of rights," he said.

Bringing to court those most responsible for global warming - including fossil fuel companies, a growing trend in the United States - was a large part of respecting human rights, he said.

If the inclusion of human rights in relation to the CDM's successor mechanism remains in the rule book, it could help safeguard groups like forest dwellers from abuses, said Duyck.

But should those references be scrapped, "the risks are very clear", he added.

## Nigeria parties sign pact for peaceful polls

AFP, Lagos

The main challenger to President Muhammadu Buhari in next year's presidential poll has signed a deal committing to peaceful elections a day after missing the initial ceremony in the capital.

"Earlier today, I appended my signature to the Peace Accord," Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) wrote on Twitter late Wednesday.

Abubakar, 72, was conspicuously absent from Tuesday's ceremony in Abuja at which Buhari and dozens of other presidential candidates signed a deal to ensure non-violence during February's crucial polls.

The PDP had put Abubakar's absence down to a "communication lapse between the National Peace Committee (NPC) and our party's national secretariat".

On Wednesday, Abubakar signed the pact with his running mate Peter Obi.

Local media said another presidential candidate, Oby Ezekwesili, a former education minister and ex-World Bank vice president who was also absent, had signed as well.

Voters in Africa's most populous nation will choose a new president and parliament on February 16 next year, with gubernatorial and state assembly elections following two weeks later.

Security around polling is a recurrent concern in Nigeria which has a history of violence sparked by identity politics, ethnicity and religion.

In 2011, about 1,000 people were killed during clashes after Buhari was defeated by Goodluck Jonathan.

## 5 killed in new flareup

AFP, Ramallah

A Palestinian shot dead two Israelis in the occupied West Bank yesterday, the military said, after security forces killed two Palestinian murder suspects, stoking fears of wider violence.

In a separate attack, a Palestinian stabbed two Israeli border police in Jerusalem's Old City before being shot dead, in the bloodiest 24 hours to hit the West Bank and Jerusalem in months.

The Israeli army said a Palestinian exited his car at a bus stop near the Ofra settlement before opening fire on soldiers and civilians.

Two people were killed and at least two others injured, although a spokesperson was unable to confirm reports the victims were Israeli soldiers.

An AFP photographer sighted two men who appeared to be soldiers lying on the ground, before their bodies were covered up.

"We are searching for the terrorist. We will find him," the military said on Twitter.

Following the attack, the army circled

**ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

Hamas man kills two Israelis, forces kill two Palestinians in West Bank

Two Israeli border police wounded in Jerusalem knife attack

Israel encircles Ramallah, sends reinforcements after attacks

the West Bank's main city of Ramallah near Ofra, closing off all entrances and sending in reinforcements, the army and an AFP correspondent said.

Troops began entering the outskirts of the city, with young Palestinian men preparing stones as they braced for clashes, the correspondent said.

The shooting came only hours after Israeli forces killed two militants allegedly responsible for West Bank attacks that claimed the lives of three Israelis, including a baby.

The armed wing of Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, which has fought three wars with Israel in Gaza since 2008, claimed the two Palestinians as its "fighters."

One of the two was Salah

Barghouti, a 29-year-old accused of shooting at Israelis on Sunday, also at a bus stop near the Ofra settlement.

That attack wounded seven people, including a woman who was seven months pregnant.

Doctors tried to save her baby boy with an emergency caesarean but he died on Wednesday and was laid to rest in Jerusalem. The mother remains in hospital in a serious condition.

The other Palestinian killed by Israeli forces on Wednesday night had been suspected of shooting dead two Israelis in October.

Ashraf Naalwa, 23, was killed when forces tried to arrest him near Nablus in the West Bank, Israel's Shin Bet security service said. The house near Nablus where Naalwa was found was peppered with bullet holes after the raid, an AFP journalist at the scene said.

Since Sunday's attack, Israeli forces have made a series of incursions into central Ramallah, the home of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas. Hebrew posters have been pasted in the West Bank over the past week inciting the killing of Abbas.



## Israel would hit Iran to ensure its own survival

### Says Netanyahu

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel would be prepared to attack inside Iran if the Jewish state's survival was at stake.

His comment came as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged the United Nations to tighten restrictions on Iran's missiles, which he warned could strike US allies, but other powers called instead for dialogue.

"Our red line is our survival," Netanyahu said at a meeting with foreign media where he was asked what his "red line" was for attacking Iranian territory, rather than its proxies in Syria and Lebanon.

"We do what is necessary to protect the state of Israel against the Iranian regime that openly calls for the annihilation of the Jewish state."

"I'm not ruling out doing anything that we need to do to defend ourselves," added Netanyahu, who sees Iran as the most dangerous threat to Israel.

He said that Israel is the only country whose military is "directly engaging Iranian forces" with air strikes in neighbouring Syria, where Iran supports the forces of President Bashar al-Assad.

Netanyahu said Wednesday that Iran's aggressive regional behaviour, in contrast to Israel's fight against radical Islamic militants and its advanced technology, had brought once-hostile Arab states closer to the Jewish state.



Israeli forces and forensic inspect the site of a drive-by shooting attack outside the West Bank settlement of Givat Asaf, northeast of Ramallah, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP