

# NEWSIN brief

## Iran unrest killed 'at least 208': Amnesty

At least 208 people are believed to have been killed during a crackdown on protests in Iran last month that followed a fuel price hike, Amnesty International said yesterday. "The number of people believed to have been killed during demonstrations in Iran that broke out on 15 November has risen to at least 208, based on credible reports received by the organization," said the London-based rights group, adding that the actual death toll is likely higher.

## Wall collapse kills 17 people in India

At least 17 people from four families in India were buried alive as they were sleeping yesterday when heavy rains caused a large wall to collapse on their homes, police said. The dead included two children in the village in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which was being pounded by torrential rain, a police official told AFP. The 20-foot (six-metre) high wall crumbled at around 5:30 am some 50 kilometres (30 miles) north of Coimbatore, the Times of India daily reported.

## Regime air strikes kill 15 civilians in Syria

Regime air strikes yesterday killed 15 civilians in Syria's last major opposition bastion, where deadly clashes between regime forces and armed groups have escalated in the past two days, a monitor said. The raids also wounded 15 civilians in a market in the town of Maaret al-Numan in the jihadist-run province of Idlib. The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it erupted in 2011.

# 'We're still in it'

## US House leader Pelosi tells UN climate meet in Spain

US Congressional leader Nancy Pelosi told a UN climate conference yesterday that the world could still count on the United States in the fight against global warming despite Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Paris Agreement.

Pelosi and 14 other members of the US Congress were in Madrid to make the point that large swathes of the United States are committed to the targets set by the 2015 agreement, as are most Democratic candidates for president.

"We're here to say to all of you, on behalf of the House of Representatives and the Congress of the United States, we're still in it, we're still in it," Pelosi said to applause at a forum of heads of state from climate-vulnerable nations.

"We see this as an existential threat," she said. "We have not lived up to the challenge."

Leading the 15-strong delegation, which included one senator, Pelosi came to the UN climate meet even as her colleagues in the House consider articles of impeachment against the US president.

Trump has dismissed global warming as a hoax, dismantling many of the climate and environmental protection policies set in place by his predecessor, Barack Obama.

Last month Trump gave formal notice of the US withdrawal from the 196-nation Paris climate treaty, which calls for capping global warming at well below two degrees Celsius, and 1.5C if possible.

The United States under Barack Obama played a key role in pushing through the 2015 pact.

"We have a moral responsibility to future generations to pass on this planet in a better way," Pelosi said.

"We see climate change as a public health issue," she said, standing alongside heads of state from Costa Rica and Bangladesh. "We see it as an economic issue because this is the way to new green technologies," she continued. "And we see it as a national security issue."

Moments before, UN Secretary General addressed the same room before speaking at the opening plenary of the 12-day meet, tasked with finalising the rules and procedures for the Paris deal, which becomes operational at the end of next year.



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Pelosi: "We have a moral responsibility to future generations."

# Brazil's climate negotiators in dark on Bolsonaro's aims

Brazil's negotiators already face a tough job at United Nations climate talks, given anger at President Jair Bolsonaro's stance on the Amazon, but it has become doubly difficult as they are in the dark on their own government's aims.

The right-wing leader has become a target for environmental lobbyists since Amazon destruction surged to an 11-year high and terrible fires raged in August, with Bolsonaro's policies encouraging deforestation and cowing environmental enforcers.

Yet as if that was not enough, Brazil's technical negotiators at the United Nations talks in Spain are disconnected from political leaders and unclear on their goals, two people familiar with the matter said.

That means the negotiators could reach a deal that would be disavowed by

government leaders. "Really what Brazil will do at the conference is anybody's guess," one of the sources told Reuters.

Adding to the confusion, Bolsonaro loyalist and Environment Minister Ricardo Salles has turned up in Madrid a week early to attend the full, two-week conference rather than just the second stage with fellow ministers from other nations.

"Only he knows what he's doing there," another source said.

As home to most of the vast Amazon rainforest that serves as a bulwark against global warming, Brazil is always a major player at environmental

talks and has often been a broker between developed and developing nations.

But its widely-publicized backsliding on domestic protections has changed that, and Brazil's official delegation in Madrid no longer includes environmental lobby groups whose credentials it traditionally sponsored.

## UN CLIMATE SUMMIT

Negotiators at summit disconnected from political leaders

Brazil's green reputation hit by surge in Amazon deforestation



Members of the public attend a vigil at the Guildhall in central London to pay tribute to the victims of the London Bridge terror attack yesterday. Inset, London mayor Sadiq Khan, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and opposition Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn take part in the vigil. PHOTO: AFP

# Israeli occupation costs Palestine \$2.5b a year: UN report

Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories has cost the economy of the Palestinians more than \$2.5 billion a year for the past two decades, a UN report said yesterday.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report estimated the total fiscal loss to the Palestinian government between 2000 and 2017 at \$47.7 billion.

The figure included \$28 billion in accrued interest and \$6.6 billion in leakage from Palestinian fiscal revenues.

It said the amount would have been enough to eliminate the Palestinian government's \$17.7 billion budget deficit over the same period more than twice over.

The report argued if the \$47 billion had been invested sensibly in the impoverished Palestinian economy, it would have created an extra two million jobs over the 18-year period, or 110,000 a year.

The report was presented at the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) in the West Bank city of Ramallah, home to the Palestinian government.

Misyef Jameel, senior researcher at MAS who worked on the report, said they only measured the direct fiscal impact.

The real figure for all losses was likely much higher, he said.

Palestinians seek a state in the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

In the West Bank, most of which is controlled by the Israeli army, Palestinians have limited self-rule.

# Lynch the rapists

## Says Indian MP during Rajya Sabha debate on vet's rape and murder

Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan led a chorus of angry and impassioned voices in parliament yesterday amid nationwide shock over the horrific rape and murder of a young veterinarian in Telangana.

"These types of people (the rape accused in the Telangana case) need to be brought out in public and lynched," Jaya Bachchan said, adding, "I think it is time... the people want the government to give a proper and definite answer".

Four men have been accused of raping and murdering a 26-year-old woman in Hyderabad on Wednesday night. According to police documents accessed by NDTV the accused planned the gruesome crime - they allegedly strangled her alive before burning the body - in detail when they saw her park her scooter near a toll booth.

"I don't know how many times I've stood and spoken after this kind of crime. I think it is time... whether Nirbhaya or Kathua or what happened in Telangana... I think the people now want the government to give a proper and definite answer," Jaya Bachchan told the Rajya Sabha.

"What has the government done? How have they tackled it? How has justice been done for the victims? I am not taking names... but shouldn't the security be held responsible? I feel only one day earlier something similar happened in that area in Telangana... why wasn't this stopped?" she continued.

Bachchan also demanded that the people who had failed to protect women and children from such horrific assaults should be "named and shamed".

She was not the only MP to speak out strongly on the matter.

# Trump won't participate

## Says White House on impeachment hearing, cites lack of 'fairness'

The White House told Democratic lawmakers on Sunday that US President Donald Trump and his lawyers would not participate in a congressional impeachment hearing this week, citing a lack of "fundamental fairness."

Trump's aides responded defiantly to the first of two crucial deadlines he faces in Congress this week as Democrats prepare to shift the focus of their impeachment inquiry from fact-finding to the consideration of possible charges of misconduct over his dealings with Ukraine.

The Democratic-led House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, tasked with considering charges known as articles of impeachment, had given Trump until 6:00 pm (2300 GMT) on Sunday to say whether he would dispatch a lawyer to take part in the judiciary panel's proceedings on Wednesday.

"We cannot fairly be expected to participate in a hearing while the witnesses are yet to be named and

while it remains unclear whether the Judiciary Committee will afford the President a fair process through additional hearings," White House counsel Pat Cipollone wrote to Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, according to a copy of



a letter seen by Reuters.

Cipollone - while citing a "complete lack of due process and fundamental fairness afforded the president" in the impeachment process - did not rule out participation in further proceedings. But he signalled that Democrats would first have to make major procedural concessions.

Nadler has given the White House a Friday deadline to say whether Trump

will mount a defense in broader impeachment proceedings.

The Judiciary Committee's Democratic staff did not immediately reply to a request for comment on the White House's refusal to participate in the hearing, which would have been the first direct involvement by the Trump camp in a process he has condemned as a partisan "witch hunt."

Democratic US Representative Don Beyer said on Twitter in response to the White House letter: "Not one process complaint made by the President and his Republican allies in Congress so far has turned out to be genuine."

Congressional investigators have been looking into whether Trump abused his power by pressuring Ukraine to launch investigations of former Democratic Vice President Joe Biden, who is running to unseat him in the 2020 presidential election, and a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, interfered in the 2016 US presidential election.



Iraqi women, some wearing surgical masks, take part in an anti-government march in the centre of the southern city of Basra yesterday. Iraq's rival parties were negotiating the contours of a new government yesterday, after the previous cabinet was brought down by a two-month protest movement demanding more deep-rooted change.

# 14 killed in Burkina Faso church attack

## Soldiers hunting down assailants

Fourteen people were killed in an attack Sunday on a church in eastern Burkina Faso where places of worship have suffered a string of Islamist assaults this year, the regional government said.

"Unidentified armed men" carried out the attack during a Sunday service at a Protestant church in the town of Hantoukoura near the border with Niger, the government statement said.

"This attack unfortunately left 14 dead and many wounded," it said. Soldiers in the region were hunting down the assailants, who fled on scooters, a security source said earlier.

The poor West African country has suffered a series of attacks on Christian targets since February, leaving 21 dead before Sunday's attack.

Burkina Faso's population is around two-thirds Muslim and one-third Christian. Jihadist groups target Christian clerics as well as Muslim ones they do not consider sufficiently radical in a country where traditionally the two religions have co-existed peaceably.

More than 700 people have been killed in Islamist unrest since fighting spilled across the border from Mali, according to an AFP count.

An ambush on a convoy transporting employees of a Canadian mining company in eastern Burkina Faso earlier this month killed 37 people, the deadliest attack in nearly five years of jihadist violence.

Attacks in Burkina Faso, which borders Mali and Niger, began in the north but spread to the east and the west of the country in 2018, while the capital Ouagadougou has been hit three times

## KSA releases 11 questioned over foreign ties: official

Saudi Arabian authorities have released 11 citizens who were detained for several days last month for questioning over suspected links to foreign entities, a Saudi official told Reuters. The new wave of detentions came as the kingdom assumes the presidency of the Group of 20 countries amid sustained Western criticism of its human rights record following last year's killing of prominent journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi agents. The detainees were questioned on suspicion of receiving funds from foreign countries and coordinating with hostile organisations, the official told Reuters without providing more details or evidence. None of them have been indicted but the case remains open and charges could still be laid, added the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

## India's navy gets first woman pilot



The Indian Navy has welcomed its first woman pilot, with Sub Lieutenant Shivangi taking control of an aircraft in another significant milestone for the country's armed forces. Shivangi, 24, who goes by one name, will be given her wings and join naval operations in a ceremony yesterday. "It's a very big thing," Shivangi told CNN. "It's a big responsibility for all of us and I know that I have to do well." Shivangi completed her basic training in 2018 at the Indian Naval Academy and was brought to Kochi, in southwest India's Kerala state, to train with the Indian naval air squadron, the INAS 550. Until 1992, India's naval forces only permitted women to serve in medical services.

## US Supreme Court to revisit gun control

A legal fight over a New York City handgun ordinance that could give the US Supreme Court's conservative majority a chance to expand gun rights went before the nine justices yesterday in one of the most closely watched cases of their current term. The court is scheduled to hear arguments starting at 10:00 am in a legal challenge backed by the influential National Rifle Association gun rights lobby group to a regulation that had prevented licensed owners from taking their handguns outside the confines of the most-populous US city. It is the first major gun case to come before the Supreme Court since 2010.