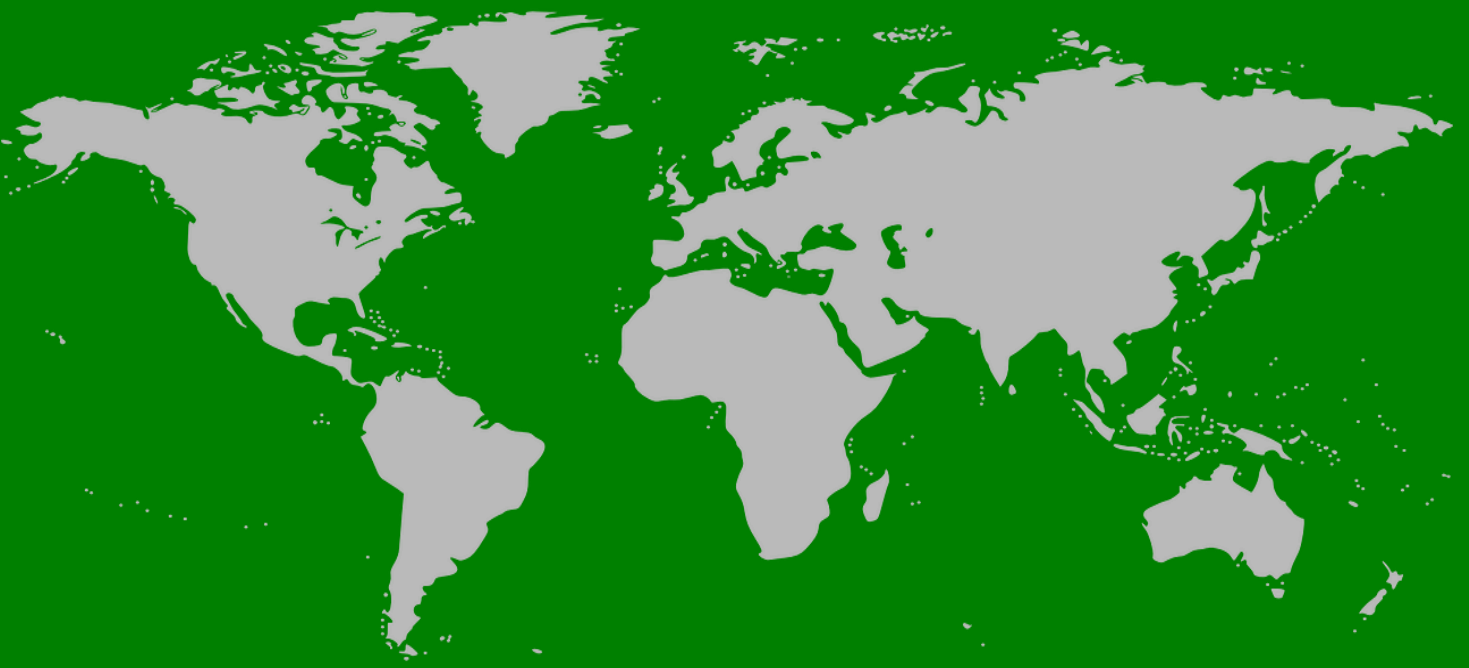


*“Discovering international relations
and contemporary global issues”*

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background



ISSUE #53
ICRP Monthly Review Series 2016



10/2016



About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

As an initiative of ICRP, the content of this magazine is written and edited by student authors. The project, as part of the Institute's Internship Programme provides the opportunity to strengthen professional skills.



ISSUE #53  **10/2016**
ICRP Monthly Review Series 2016

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45 Gyongyosi utca, Budapest 1031 – Hungary

ISSN 2063-8205

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Britain begins the process of exiting the EU

Raluca Grigorescu ■

■ After a long period of uncertainty, Britain is beginning its process of exiting the European Union. While dealing with divided opinions from Scotland and Northern Ireland and a possible independence referendum in Scotland, Theresa May is trying to create trade partnerships and ensure a smooth transition for United Kingdom.

Prime Minister Theresa May recently stated that she would like to invoke Article 50 by the end of March next year, which will give Britain a two-year period to close a deal with European Union. Also Theresa May's goal is seeking freedom for business so they can operate in the European Union's market. Part of the transition strategy is also seeking partnerships with countries outside the European Union in order to strengthen United Kingdom's role in global trade. Therefore in November Theresa May will lead a delegation of business persons to India, the first visit outside of European Union since she took the office. There will be discussions regarding commercial issues with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and during the visit a number of trade deals are going to be signed.

Confusion still dominates the business environment, especially in the banking sector, the most affected by Brexit some of the biggest banks are getting ready to relocate while smaller banks want reallocation as early as possible by 2017.

Amidst concerns other countries are reacting:

United Kingdom's trade partner Iceland stated that they will welcome them back into the European Free Trade Association. Also, Finland requested to have security cooperation included in the Brexit agreement after Britain, which has preferred in the past the NATO alliance announced that it opposed any European army or a joint European Union military headquarters. In the meantime Scotland and Northern Ireland are trying to negotiate their own deals in spite of Prime Minister Theresa May's efforts to persuade them not to in order to have a common strategy. Scotland and England appear to have different priorities, Sturgeon, head of the Scottish National Party, declared she would make different proposals to keep Scotland in the single market even if Britain will exit.

Britain's vote to leave European Union and Scotland's vote to stay also sparked independence discussions in spite of the fact that Scots rejected the idea two years ago, currently there are no polls that could indicate a pro-independence vote.

Northern Ireland is also reacting by preparing to question in high court the decision to leave European Union without a vote in parliament they are also commenting that Prime Minister Theresa May and her team do not have the authority to invoke Article 50 of the EU Lisbon Treaty, the way a nation can leave European Union without the explicit backing of the parliament.



France begins dismantling the Jungle camp in Calais

Veronika Tóth ■

■ Violence continued to increase in the Jungle refugee camp in the French town of Calais. The clearance operation and the demolition of the camp began on 25 October, and the plan was to relocate the migrants in different refugee centres around France. However, there is a concern that other new camps will be established as migrants are continuing to arrive in the region.

The Jungle camp is situated near the port of Calais and close to the Channel Tunnel. Officially around 7,000 migrants live in the camp, which has become a key symbol of Europe's migration crisis. Not just the population continued to rise during the year, but also the reports of violence in the four-square-kilometre Jungle. The camp is very unpopular in the area, many locals and truck operators were protesting lately. Natacha Bouchart, the centre-Right mayor of Calais lobbied the government in order to demolish the camp and she was present as the first huts were destroyed. She said: "For the last three years life has been hell in Calais". Over 1,200 police officers were sent for the clearance operation.

The refugees are mostly Afghans, Sudanese and Eritreans and they are desperate to cross the Channel Tunnel and reach the United Kingdom to claim asylum and start a new life. According to the French government 5,596 people were transported from the camp for resettlement, which includes 234 minors who were taken to

the UK. However, many unaccompanied children were left alone in Calais. Aid workers highlighted that around 100 young people slept in very bad conditions, while the head of the regional government said the number was 68. The British Interior Minister Amber Rudd said that Britain will bring the children from France "as quickly and as safely as possible", but without mentioning specific numbers.

More and more migrants are trying to hide themselves in cargo vehicles in order to cross the Channel Tunnel. Also, many of them have attempted to get abroad on ferries and trains illegally. French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve told the lower house of the parliament that there is a need to increase the controls in the area in order to prevent the establishment of new illegal camps. Natacha Bouchart, the mayor emphasised that the demolition of the camp will not solve the migrant crisis in Calais, as there is a lack of a "regulatory framework to guarantee that there will be no more migrant camps in Calais." She also pointed out that migrants are still arriving in Calais. The Jungle is considered to be a symbol of Europe's failure to solve its worst migration crisis since World War II. Even though the demolition of the Jungle may improve the current situation in a short term, but definitely not in a long term, as more migrants are on their way to the French coast from the Mediterranean.



Launch of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency

Annalisa Baldassarri ■

■ After less than a year following the European Commission's legislative proposal, on last October 6 the European Border and Coast Guard Agency was officially launched. Aiming to strengthen European Union's member states' capacities at the external borders, the establishment of a European Border and Coast Guard Agency is part of the measures provided for by the European Agenda on Migration. The new Agency has been set out in order to replace Frontex, the previous agency appointed to monitor the Schengen area's borders.

Frontex was enforced since 2005 with the main task of coordinate the responsibilities for borders' control and for receiving asylum seekers. But Frontex efficiency has been considered to be insufficient. Many criticisms have been raised upon different aspects of the above-mentioned agency's operation, among which one of the highlighted issues was represented by the fact that the agency did not have its own permanent border guard service.

The launch event of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency took place on the border between Bulgaria and Turkey; a ceremony emphasised by the words of EU's Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos who spoke about a fundamental day in the history of

European Border management. "From now onward, the external EU border of one member state is the external border of all member states – both legally and operationally." Under the new mandate the Agency's activities have been reinforced in order to produce the best response to the security and migration challenges of the 21st century. First of all, the permanent service of the Agency will be more than doubled and the Agency will be able to buy its own equipment. According to European Commission's valuation at least 1,500 permanent staff will be available, as to removing the risk of a shortage of personnel for the Agency's operations. Same precaution will be realised in regard to a technical equipment poll. In addition, a new task will be related to the implementation of European standards of border management through periodic risk analysis and mandatory vulnerability assessments.

The whole body will fully enter into force during the next months, while, by December 6, only the branches which will be at disposal in cases of emergency will officially become operational. First vulnerability assessments of each single state will be concluded in 2017. "We are now better equipped than before" Avramopoulos said.



EU gets tough on African migrants

Badra Aliou Doumbia ■

■ Halting successfully a mass influx of refugees by closing Greek borders and cutting a controversial deal with Turkey, European Union leaders are getting tough on African migrants too.

Expected to endorse pilot projects during the Brussels Summit which will pressure African governments to slow the exodus of people from the continent. Additionally, swift results from an EU campaign to deport large numbers who reach Italy.

A threat of cutting development aid and restricting trade with those African countries that do not cooperate before the next migration season was behind the diplomatic language.

The tough measures implemented by the European Union is to identify illegal migrants who will be flown back to Africa before next year's migration season when thousands are expected to engage in dangerous trips across the Mediterranean using boats from Libya.

Despite much criticism from rights groups, the cooperative deal with Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan has cut arrivals in Greek islands to a trickle and Brussels sees it as a success. Unfortunately, that model is no help for Italy as

Libya does not have a stable government capable of controlling the migration route through the central Mediterranean.

The new foreign policy approach of EU toward migration is inherently distasteful because historically they have always been the good guys. Collett asserted that "It's the first time they are being asked not to just be the good guys anymore."



*Distressed persons are transferred to a Maltese patrol vessel in October 2013.
Photo: US Navy [Wikimedia Commons]*



Referendum on migrant quotas in Hungary

Annalisa Baldassarri ■

■ Hungary, as one of the countries involved in the recent immigration crisis, found itself to be a passageway on the Western Balkans route to Germany, Austria and other EU's member states, in 2015. During the last year nearly 400,000 refugees passed through Hungary; capital Budapest was overflowed, people were spilling out in the streets of the centre, trying to reach Germany. Immigration crisis has stroked, as is well known, other European countries, especially, Italy and Greece which both became transit states towards other destinations in the same way as Hungary. First hard-line reactions and measures coming from Hungarian Government and authorities against this crisis go back to summer and autumn 2015 when a razor-wire was erected with intent to seal off the Hungarian border with Serbia. Critical words toward Orbán's measures had been said by the whole political world; with the echo, in the first place, of Angela Merkel's words about the illiberal and, therefore, non-democratic line of Budapest's government. It followed the proposal hailed from the international desks 'of the European Union concerning the introduction of an obligatory migrant quotas' system as

relocation plan. The approved plan aimed to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers over two years from the frontline states Italy, Greece and Hungary to all other member states. As part of the plan, Hungary was meant to welcome 1,294 refugees but the country refused the plan and challenged the legitimacy of EU's quota system. As a result, the number of people "in need of international protection" expected to be taken by the Magyar country were relocated to Italy and Greece instead.



Viktor Orbán. Photo: European People's Party [Wikimedia Commons]

Hungarian Prime Minister's firm opposition toward EU's directives in managing the crisis have given rise to a never-ending succession of strong reactions which lead us to the events of





Migrants at Eastern Railway Station in Budapest in 2015. Photo: Andor Elekes [Wikimedia Commons]

recent months. On February 2016, President Orbán announced the intent of holding a referendum as a new attempt to oppose the imposition of quotas as a way to deal with the refugee crisis. During summer 2016, the date for the national consultation was disclosed and on October 2 Hungarian people has been called to the poll. Orbán's party, Fidesz, has vigorously expressed the motivations about the necessity of this referendum, through a strong campaign during the last few months. Orbán has clarified his perspective on migrant quotas by stating that such an imposition without approval of national governments constitutes an "abuse of power". Furthermore, as reported by Aljazeera, Orbán reminded Hungarians of their "duty" to help his government to protest and fight the failed "liberal methods" of the "Brussels elite". "Mass migration without control means a real threat. It endangers the peaceful and safe European way of life," he wrote in the Magyar Idok newspaper.

The advertisement of his vision has been fully expressed by the propaganda campaign realised

by the government. According to a public interest disclosure by the Prime Minister's Cabinet Officer, the majority party have spent at least HUF 11.3 billion on "information campaign" in regard to policies of immigration since December 2015. During the months previous to referendum's day, Budapest's streets, subways and in general elsewhere have been covered by slogans in favour of the campaign. Lots of critics have been casted toward the presence of billboards which read "Take No Chances, Vote No" to the quota system. The implications of the "Take No Chances" slogan in terms of stoking fears and xenophobia toward refugees (the phrase has been considered to imply that behind every refugee there is the risk of a possible terrorist) have been put under the spotlight by many actors. On the frontline, human rights defender Amnesty International did not miss the chance to define treatments realised of Budapest's authority as "horrific".

The final reply to Orbán's campaign arrived on the last October 2. The outcome of the national consultation has not been the desired one by the ruling party. Hungarian referendum on migrant policies failed due to the lack of quorum (50% of eligible voters) necessary for the validity of the poll. Criticisms resounded also in regard to the formula used for the question put to voters, Hungarian citizens were asked: "Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?" An astounding 98% of voters rejected the impositions of EU, but





Hungarian-Serbian border barrier.
 Photo: Délmagyarország/Schmidt Andrea [Wikimedia Commons]

only 40.4% cast valid ballots, short of the required 50%. The result of the consultation was even higher than surveys. Despite the failing out of referendum, which will not have any resonance according to EU, a government spokesman did not speak of “invalidity” of the outcome. “The government initiated the referendum, so both politically and legally the

outcome is binding,” he said. On the other hand, the opposition Democratic coalition asserts that the low turnout showed that government did not have the majority and so the supported needed. Orban confirmed the existence of legal consequences of the vote and announced his next commitments. Among the new measures, Hungarian President intends to carry out, there is a task to reform the Constitution. Furthermore, there will be Orban attempt to start negotiations with Brussels where, however, he will have to face a wall, in view of, European Parliament President, Martin Schulz’s latest words. The German President defined Orban’s action to launch the vote on decisions which himself validated at EU level and which concern only 1,300 refugees in the face of 160,000 of those who have to be relocated from Italy and Greece, as a “dangerous game”.



Refugee march in Hungary towards the Austrian border on 4 September 2015. Photo: Joachim Seidler [Wikimedia Commons]

“mass migration without control means a real threat. It endangers the peaceful and safe European way of life”



Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada

Deniz Horuz ■

■ Negotiations between European Union and Canada on the free trade agreement CETA, from which both sides would benefit by removing customs and harmonising standards, were launched in 2009. After 7 years, the free trade agreement between the European Union and Canada was signed on 30 October at Brussels. In Brussels, European Union Council President Donald Tusk, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and EU Commissioner Jean-Claude Juncker signed the historic agreement.

It is envisaged that when CETA enters into force, 98 per cent of customs taxes between the EU and Canada will be abolished, which will mean an increase of 12 billion euros in bilateral trade volume, employment and economic growth.

The President of the EU Council, Donald Tusk said that “we have signed the CETA and Strategic Partnership Agreements, and I am proud of it. Free trade and globalisation are protecting hundreds of millions of people from poverty. We need to speak with people fairly and convincingly about the positive effects of free trade.” Tusk said.

On the same line of thinking is also the EU Commission President Juncker who said that “A

new era has begun today for EU and Canadian people. The CETA will offer new opportunities for more than half a billion people, and the CETA will set the level of the best and progressive deal we have made with the EU” – said Juncker.

On the other hand, the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau noted that “this deal is the result of long negotiations, which will increase trade by 20 per cent, and the CETA will contribute to growth and employment.” said Trudeau. Furthermore he added that “this is a positive deal for our people. They hear people's voices, they respond to their concerns, and trade agreements are useful for everyone”, concluded the prime minister.

In front of the EU Council's building, when they were signing to agreement, hundreds of people gathered and protested the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Canada. Due to protesters, the Belgian police took extensive security measures in front of the building of the EU Council. Entrance to the EU Council was surrounded by wire looms. TOMA vehicles were stationed around the building, horse policemen and fire hoses were installed to be used against the demonstrators.



New “Cold War” between Russia and the West

Edina Paleviq ■

■ Russia’s President announces an important nuclear deal. Putin’s step could lead to growing confrontations across the globe, as he challenges American international hegemony.



Image: Carlos3653 [Wikimedia Commons]

President Putin said that the NATO missile defence was directed against Russia and this jeopardised the highest interests of Moscow. The US could also fire nuclear missiles from their missile defence bases. He reacts to the withdrawal from the agreement on the Elimination of Intermediate-Range Missiles (Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, INF Treaty), concluded in 1987 by Ronald Reagan and Michael Gorbachev, and announces the positioning of nuclear missiles on the ships of the Baltic Fleet, Kaliningrad and the Oblasts, west of the Urals.

The Russian foreign ministry has accused the Obama administration of attempting the final destruction of relations with Russia. According to the deputy foreign minister of Russia, Sergei Ryabkov, Moscow would retaliate in kind if the US goes ahead with sanctions against Russia in response to the bombing of Aleppo. Putin made this new confrontation clear, where he said “It is not because of Syria. This is about one nation’s attempt to enforce its decision on the whole world.” On 3 October, it came near to formal declaration of “Cold War”, when Putin cancelled a plutonium reprocessing deal over the US “unfriendly” policies.

Experts fear that the near-collapse of diplomacy between these two countries could increase the danger of a “hot” proxy war or an even worst scenario, direct Russian-Western warfare. Potential flashpoints include the Baltic, where NATO and Russia have accused each other of troop build-up and as well as eastern Ukraine, where Russia continues to supply and direct the separatist republics of Luhansk and Donetsk, but the most dangerous flashpoint is Syria.

This is a critical moment for the US and Russia, but perhaps there is an opportunity for Washington and Moscow to overcome their current impasse.



South Africa announces its withdrawal from ICC

Veronika Tóth ■

■ It never happened before, but the International Criminal Court is about to lose some of its members: during the same week, first Burundi, followed by South Africa announced its withdrawal from the international tribunal.

South Africa's minister of justice Michael Masutha said to the press in Pretoria on 21 October that South Africa will soon submit a bill in parliament in order to withdraw from the International Criminal Court. Michael Masutha also added that a written notice about the country's intention was already submitted to the United Nations secretary general. However, the withdrawal from the ICC will be only formalised one year after the notification, therefore during the next 12 months' notice period; South Africa will remain under the Rome Statute.

Pretoria's tentative to leave the ICC is related to Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese President's visit to South Africa in 2015. Omar al-Bashir is accused of organising war crimes and crimes against humanity during the conflict in the Darfur region in western Sudan by the ICC. Even though the tribunal issued an international arrest warrant, he has made diplomatic visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In 2015 Omar al-Bashir visited South Africa, however the justice minister said: "The



International Criminal Court in The Hague. Photo: Vincent van Zeijst [Wikimedia Commons]

implementation of the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court Act 2002 is in conflict and inconsistent with the provisions of the Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges Act 2001." According to the Rome Statute, the ICC member states are legally obliged to arrest those who are sought by the tribunal. However, South Africa did not attempt to release Omar al-Bashir to the ICC.

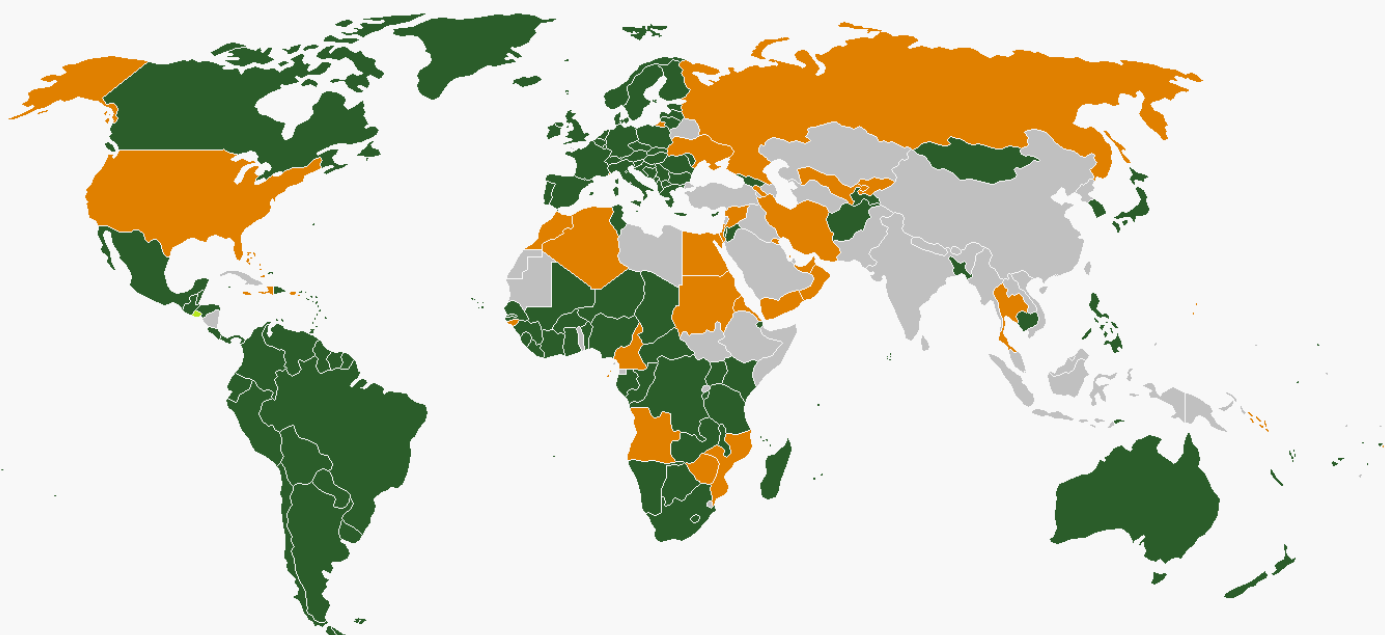
The ICC was established in July 2002, when the Rome Statute entered into force and its headquarters can be found in The Hague in the Netherlands consisting 124 member states. Being the first legal body with permanent international jurisdiction, it tries four types of crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression and war crimes.



It is important to mention that the same week, before South Africa, Burundi already declared that it would take the step to leave the ICC. The parliament voted in favour of withdrawing from the Rome statute and Pierre Nkurunziza, the President of Burundi signed the decree. Several leaders across the African continent criticised the ICC, as they believe that the international tribunal is targeting them unfairly. South Africa's current political climate is becoming worrisome. Jackson Mthembu, the chief whip of the governing political party urges on its entire leadership – including President Jacob Zuma – to step down. The African National Congress is South Africa's governing social democratic political party, which liberated South Africa from white minority rule in 1994. During the recent municipal elections in August, the ANC performed the lowest in its history.

International Criminal Court accused of being mainly focused on African continent

Accusations of prejudice have been, recently, directed against the International Criminal Court by some African states, as South Africa and Burundi have notified the United Nations their intention to withdraw from the Rome Statute. Following the line, Gambia has made known the same intention, but has not officially notified its plan of withdrawal yet. At the basis of the above-mentioned states' concerns there is a specific accusation, through which they claim an alleged and exclusive insistence perpetrated by the court against the leaders of African continent. Nine ongoing investigations out of a total of ten involve Africa. The events have been commented by United Nation Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; as reported by UK news agency Reuters he highlighted how "these challenges are best addressed not by diminishing support for the Court, but by strengthening it from within".



States parties of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Image: Snocrates [Wikimedia Commons]

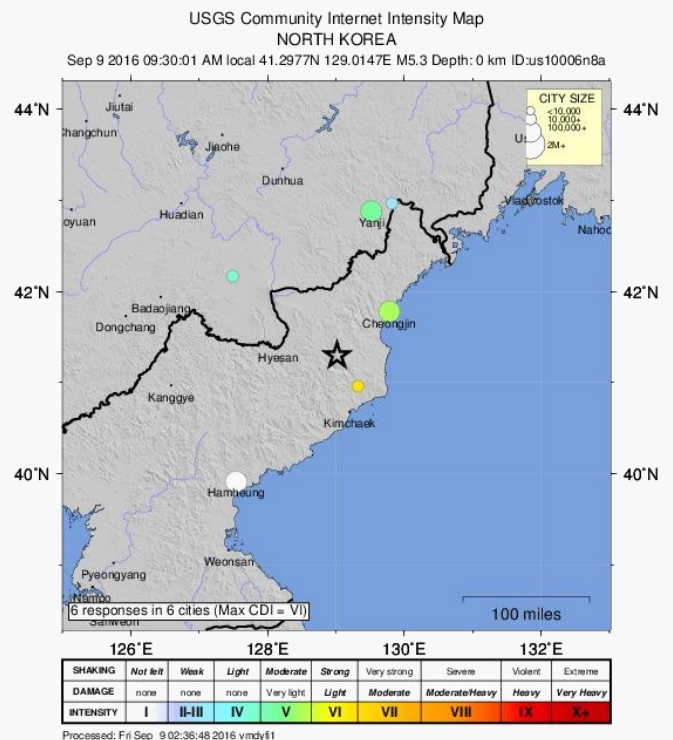


North Korea's nuclear tests

Edina Paleviq ■

■ North Korea conducted another nuclear test on its 68th founding anniversary, 9 September 2016 just eight months after its fourth nuclear test in January. This year's second nuclear test was a response to the March's sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council. The adopted Resolution 2270 placed strict restrictions on North Korea's international trade, shipping and its overseas representatives. Like the four other nuclear tests, it took place in an underground tunnel in a mountainous place called Punggye-ri, in the north-east, only 100km from the Chinese border and about 19km from Sungjibaegan, North Korea. According to experts, the latest had an explosive power of almost 10 kilotons and is the most powerful nuclear test conducted by North Korea so far. In a meeting in Seoul, the day after, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se said that this test shows that North Korea's nuclear capacity has reached a considerable level after quickly progressing in the past 10 years. North Korea said its standardisation of a warhead will allow it to produce at will and as many as it wants a variety of smaller, lighter and diversified nuclear warheads of higher strike power, despite the threat of increased sanctions. North Korea's actions have sparked criticism from a few countries, especially from the US, neighbours China, South Korea and Japan. The US Security Council announced immediate work on a resolution. The international community is now faced with the challenge of formulating a

new strategy, but calling for more sanctions, experts do not believe would work. Stratfor's vice president of strategic analysis, Rodger Baker said "North Korea sees sanctions really as a justification for further development of the nuclear weapons". Even its closest ally China, does not believe that by cutting all the economic ties with North Korea, Kim Jong-un would stop nuclear testing, but that can create new troubles. According to experts, North Korea will continue to conduct provocative acts in order to achieve its foreign policy objectives and its leader Kim Jong-un is showing that he can be as dangerous as his predecessors.



Explosion earthquakes detected after nuclear tests in September 2016. Image: USGS [Wikimedia Commons]



Philippines President wants “separation from the US”

Edina Paleviq ■

■ Philippines current president Rodrigo Duterte, on his first state visit to Beijing declared that he was breaking Philippines’ military and economic alliance with the United States. Duterte made this announcement in front of Chinese government officials and business leaders who participated in the Philippines-China Trade and Investment Forum. He said: “I announce my separation from the United States both in the military but economics also. [...] I have separated from them so I will be dependent on you for a long time but don't worry we will also help. [...] I realign myself in your ideological flow and maybe I will also go to Russia to talk to Putin. There are three of us against the world: China, Philippines and Russia.” This means that apart from the huge ramifications that these two countries could have, this move could also alter the balance of power in the wider region.

The Philippines is a former US colony and since the late 19th century, the classic age of great power politics, the two nations had a long and sometimes rocky relationship. Today, an estimated four million US citizens are of Philippine ancestry and more than 220,000 US citizens live in the Philippines, of which a large

number are US veterans. For many of these people, remittances to families in Philippines are often economic lifelines and have an important role in local economy. Apart from this, the Philippines is also one of the main tourist destinations for Americans. After Japan and China, the USA is the Philippines’ third-largest trading partner. According to the US State Department, between these two countries over 25 billion USD are traded each year. The investment from the US companies is more than 4.7 billion USD.

The two countries also have a long and complex security relationship. In the early years of the Cold War, Washington and Manila signed a defence treaty for conducting joint exercises and other military training for preparedness of the Philippines’ Armed Forces in response to humanitarian disasters or other crises. They have more than 28 joint exercises each year. Furthermore, the relationship is also a pillar of the US strategic rebalance to Asia.

Washington has not received any formal notice yet, but if it does this could affect Philippines’ trade and labour movement.



Latin America Summit

Daniella Vecsei ■



*Official photo of the XXV. Ibero-American Summit.
Photo: Presidencia Perú [Flickr]*

■ On 29 October 2016, the 25th Ibero-American Summit was held in Cartagena, Venezuela. The official agenda was not only about youth, education and entrepreneurship but touched heavily on the two South American countries in connection with Venezuela’s fast-escalating political crisis and Colombia’s stuttering peace process as well. The Venezuelan Prime Minister, Nicolas Maduro, contrary to the others, did not make an appearance at the summit meeting, just his foreign minister, Delcy Rodriguez. Maduro’s popularity has plummeted during a deep economic crisis and after their government suspended a referendum. According to Pedro Pablo Kuczynski the president of Peru, it is very difficult for leaders to meet and not negotiate the region’s most burning issues, moreover he importuned a diplomatic offensive in view of Venezuela’s “potential humanitarian crisis”.

Another topic which turned up was about the urgency to set up a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or FARC. The 52-year war has caused the death of nearly a quarter of a million people. Juan Manuel Santos, the president of Colombia, has encountered with the opposition to hear their concerns, and government negotiators are qualifying the accord with FARC leadership in Cuba. He also said that, there is no desire to meddle in what happens in other countries, but there is eagerness to guarantee all Latin Americans progress and not regress. Furthermore, the directors summoned Argentina and the United Kingdom to maintain negotiations about the fate of Falkland Islands, which Argentina calls the Malvinas, and find a “definitive solution” to their long-running disagreement.



*President of the Dominican Republic Danilo Medina with Miguel Vargas.
Photo: PresidenciaRD [Flickr]*



Colombia referendum: voters reject FARC peace deal

Veronika Tóth ■

■ Recently, President Juan Manuel Santos received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end the 52 years of war with FARC guerrillas, but the Colombians have rejected the peace deal as they don't believe that the agreement would bring justice to the country. Some argue that the "no" voters have put the country once again into an unstable situation; but the President will continue to seek peace with the rebel group however, the time is short.



Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos.
Photo: Romério Cunha [Flickr]

In a plebiscite on October 2, Colombian voters had to vote with "Yes" or "No" to the question, "Do you support the accord that puts an end to armed conflict and constructs a stable and durable nation?" Polls had anticipated that the peace deal would pass, however the voters decided otherwise. 50.2% of Colombians have rejected the peace deal to end 52 years of war with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrillas. On the other side 49.8% of voters were in favour of the agreement, leading to the narrowest of margins, less than 0.5%.

After four years of negotiations and talks in Havana the peace deal was signed by President Juan Manuel Santos and FARC leader Timoleon Jimenez on 26 September. The United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, and many Latin American leaders were also present at the ceremony. The deal would have only come into force if the Colombians would have ratified it, and voted with a yes in the referendum. It is crucial to highlight that before the referendum, President Santos said the BBC, that there was



“no Plan B” for ending the conflict. However, the president accepted the outcome of the vote and he promised that he would continue to work in order to achieve peace. The President also added that the bilateral ceasefire would remain in place, which was signed on 29 August. The FARC leader also known as Timochenko announced that he and the rebel are committed to secure an end to the conflict.

those who voted with a “no”. The majority of them argued that the peace agreement “was letting the rebels get away with murder”. The deal would establish special courts in order to try crimes committed during the conflict. Those who confess would have received less strict sentences, without spending any time in conventional prisons. The government planned to transfer a monthly stipend to the demobilised



*Colombians marching for the freedom of the people kidnapped by the FARC in 2008.
Photo: Marco Suárez [Wikimedia Commons]*

The country was very much divided regionally; the majority of the outlying provinces supported the peace deal, while the regions closer to the capital and in the inland have rejected the deal. In Colombia’s capital, Bogota, 56% of the voters were in favour the deal. In addition, the weather had an impact on the vote, as Hurricane Matthew swept through Colombia’s Yes-leaning Caribbean coast, causing a low participation. Even though the rejection of the peace deal shocked many on a national and international level, there are several factors which explains

FARC rebels, but the “no” voters pointed out that is it not acceptable to provide financial help for criminals, while many citizens around the country are struggling. Also, many don’t believe that the rebels will keep their promise that they will out down the arms. Many also said that they just simply don’t just the rebels referring that previous peace negotiations already failed because of the FARC. A key point under the agreement, that FARC would get 10 seats in the Colombian Congress in the elections of 2018 and 2022,



which is improper and unfair according to many citizens. Overall, the majority of the Colombians cannot forget the decades of terrorism, extortion, kidnapping and drug-trafficking, causing many deaths, pain and suffering. The conflict already killed an estimated 260,000 people and therefore the Colombians cannot forgive the FARC.



Ceremony for Colombian Ceasefire Agreement, Havana in June 2016. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (centre left), President of Colombia, shakes hands with Timoleón Jiménez ("Timochenko"), Commander of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia -- People's Army (FARC-EP), at the ceremony in Havana for the signing of a ceasefire and the laying down of arms between the Government of Colombia and (FARC-EP). At their side is Raúl Castro Ruz (centre right), President of Cuba. Pictured looking on (from left): Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba; UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Photo: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe [Flickr]

Former President Alvaro Uribe conducted a campaign for a "no" vote, but he was surprised by the outcome of the vote, as he predicted that the "yes" vote would win. After the referendum, he claimed that he is not opposed to peace, but that there is a strong need to renegotiate some parts of the peace deal. Alvaro Uribe referred to the "correction" as follows. He argues that those who found guilty should not be able to run for public office and that the FARC leaders should be imprisoned for their committed crimes. Regarding the constitution, he outlined that it

should not be changed. Also, the victims of the conflict should be compensated. The Former President wanted "political pluralism which can't be perceived as a reward for crimes committed, social justice without risk to honest enterprise". The reaction to the results was very different among the citizens. On one hand, many Colombians were watching the results on giant screens and many of them very sad with the results, FARC leader Timochenko also expressed his disappointment. Some protesters walked through Plaza de Bolivar dressed in white and carrying white flags till the house of President Juan Manuel Santos to show their support of the peace deal. On the other hand, those who voted "no" were celebrating on the streets.

The question arose after the results come out, so what now, what next? Both the President and the FARC leader is willing to respect the ceasefire, however the government outlined that it will honour it until the end of the month. Therefore, there is a strong need that the two men Juan Manuel Santos and Timochenko have to find a solution in working together in order to bring peace to the country. The main concern is if the two parties are actually really willing to change the peace agreement, if so how, as the verdict of the voters cannot be ignored. The time pressure is, indeed, as the FARC's troops and the UN team which is responsible to supervise their disarmament process, cannot remain in limbo for a long time. Barring a tripartite commitment to reach a solution, it is very likely that Colombia will return to war.

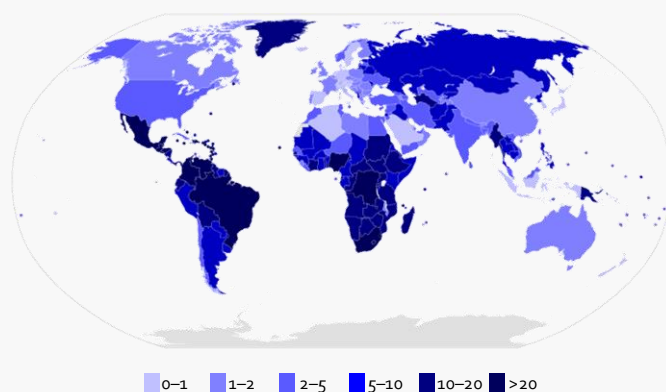


More people had been killed in Brazil than in civil-war torn Syria

Debóra Kovács ■

■ According to new research information released by the Brazilian Public Security Centre NGO and IPEA, more people have died by violence in Brazil than in Syria. The homicide rate has risen by 21% in the last decade. The leader of the researching group Renato Sergio de Lima told the AFP French news agency, that the number of the registered homicides never been higher in Brazil's history before. In the same period of time around 55,000 people were killed by violence in Brazil, while 58,000 died during the civil-war last year in Syria. That is 160 homicides per day.

Compared to Syria's 16 million inhabitants, Brazil is a much larger country with its own population of 200 million. In 2015 the average of homicide rate was 28.6 people out of 100,000 but lately this number reached 57 murders per 100,000 in Sergipe state. The university coordinator for criminal studies and public safety, Claudio Beato told the newspaper that these observations are clearly showing the fact that "we are still facing outstanding levels of violent crime" and Brazil is the world leader in this case. Beato also said that it would be essential to put police in strategic



*Map of the world by homicide rate according to latest UNODC data.
Image: Nikko2013 [Wikimedia Commons]*

locations and spread them out intelligently. The problem – as he said – is that there are still many places in the country where the forces are doing nothing to lower the crime rate either because of the lack of ability, they do not have the resources, or simply because they do not have the willpower to do so.

According to Samira Bueno, executive director of the forum, the other main problem is that police kills a lot and they think they have the right to decide who dies and who lives. Police killed 3,345 people in 2015 which is 6.3% more than in 2014. It means 9 people a day. Although close to 400 officers died during this period of time, but only a third of them were killed on their duty.



■ News in Brief

Domestic affairs affecting international relations

Bank of England governor steps down

■ Mark Carney, the governor of Bank of England announced that he will step down in June, 2019. Originally we wanted to announce his choice on whether he planned to continue until 2021 by the end of the year, but the media through newspaper records persuaded him to make a decision. According to the Prime Minister Theresa May, Carney's resolution would ensure "continuity and stability as we negotiate our exit from the European Union". Tyrie, a politician for the Conservative Party criticised the Treasury and Carney for moving away from the original five-year term, but not adhering to the normal 8 years that governors commonly stand. On the other hand May would be supportive of him going on beyond his 5 years and thinking of him as "the right man for the job".

Mariano Rajoy sworn in for a second term as a prime minister

■ Spain ends its 10 months without a head of government as Mariano Rajoy has been sworn in for a second term as a prime minister. In spite of having won the votes he is expected to face difficulties in governing with the congress keeping close attention to his choices. People have taken the streets to protest against his re-election, unhappy with the corruption scandals surrounding his party and the cuts that he made during his first term.

Poland's abortion ban rejected after mass protests

■ The Polish government had taken the decision to draft a bill that abolished the right of abortion, even in exceptional circumstances, including sickness and rape this year on 7th October. Because of the controversial point that prohibits abortion even in exceptional cases, including sickness and rape, tens of thousands of women have protested for the drafting of a bill that abolishes the right to abortion. Women who oppose the design of the law are supported by the general population including the trade unions throughout the country. That is why on the day called "Black Monday", some businesses and restaurants were not open. Approximately 30,000 protesters participated in the action in Warsaw on 10 October dressed in black against the decision and casting slogans "we want doctors, not missionaries." In the case of the Polish parliament, the bill proposed by the anti-abortion group and forbidding the abortion was rejected. Whether the design will be complete or not, the arrangements will be made after the start of the lower assembly. In the aftermath, the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo, who announced that the government will take new steps to protect human life, announced that more money will be allocated to families with children with disabilities and an information campaign to "encourage the preservation of life" will begin.



Estonia's parliament elects country's first female president

■ A former EU budget auditor, Kersti Kaljulaid obtained 81 votes in the election for the 5 year presidential term. With this, she became the first female head of state who was elected by the Estonian parliament on 3 October 2016. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves carved a role as a forthright critic of Russia and a campaigner for government digitalisation and cybersecurity.

UNMISS statement on increased incidents of violence in South Sudan

■ The United Nation Mission in South Sudan is acutely concerned over increased reports of violence and armed conflict in parts of the country in the last few weeks. The UNMISS castigate in no uncertain terms these acts of brutality and aggressions against non-hostilities and un-armed civilians. Moreover they reminded all parties that such attacks may constitute serious human rights violations, inclusive of crime against humanity and war crimes. The Mission also received information of clashes in the Equatorials and of attacks by unknown armed men on civilian convoy which caused the deaths of 20 people. Furthermore, the Mission demanded that all parties ensure that their commanders regulate their forces and shield civilians and their belongings, moreover to urgently end the battling throughout South Sudan.



*Sudanese combatant with G3 rifle.
Photo: Steve Evans [Wikimedia Commons]*

Boko Haram releases 21 Chibok girls

■ On the night of 14 April 2014, Boko Haram seized 276 pupils from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok. Fifty-seven managed to escape in the immediate aftermath of the abduction. The kidnapping has become a hot political issue in Nigeria, government and military have been criticised for their handling and failure to rescue any of the girls. However, negotiations between Nigeria's government and Boko Haram has been followed by the release of twenty-one of the more than 200 Nigerian girls kidnapped from a school in Chibok by Boko Haram. The AFP news agency quoting a local source affirmed, the girls were exchanged for four Boko Haram prisoners in Banki in northeast Nigeria but later the information minister denied that any Boko Haram prisoners were for the release of the girls.



Hillary Clinton again overwhelmed by the storm of Mailgate

■ Hillary Clinton again found herself overwhelmed by the storm of scandals linked to Mailgate, as FBI announced to reopen the investigation ten days before presidential elections. The scandal, on which a debate is developing concerns since about a year, involves Clinton's email practices and the presumption of Clinton's negligence in the use of a private email service for official communications, including a great number of emails which would be marked as classified by the State Department. FBI is now investigating a new group of emails which could lead to evidence of Hillary Clinton's potential violation of the statutes realised through the use of a private email system in handling classified information. Clinton's firm reaction has asked FBI's Director James Comey for immediate "clarity" on the facts. Democratic Party's candidate showed herself sure that she will end up in the clear, as it happened after the previous investigation closed in July.



Hillary Clinton. Photo: Marc Nozell [Wikimedia Commons]



Protester during a rally in 2015. Photo: Carlos Díaz [Wikimedia Commons]

Venezuela anti-Maduro protests

■ On 27 October 2016, at least 20 people have been injured and a police officer died, when thousands of people took to the streets to protest against President Nicolas Maduro's government, because they had halted the process of a referendum recall. Although opposition activist had gathered approximately 1.8 million signatures, 400,000 of which were validated by electoral authorities, but officials said the signature collection process has been marred by fraud. Grimaldi Lopez at the rally in the capital said, that the referendum is their constitutional right and yet the government denied it. Nicolas Maduro was accused of violating the constitution and therefore the country's opposition-led parliament voted on Tuesday to open a trial against him.



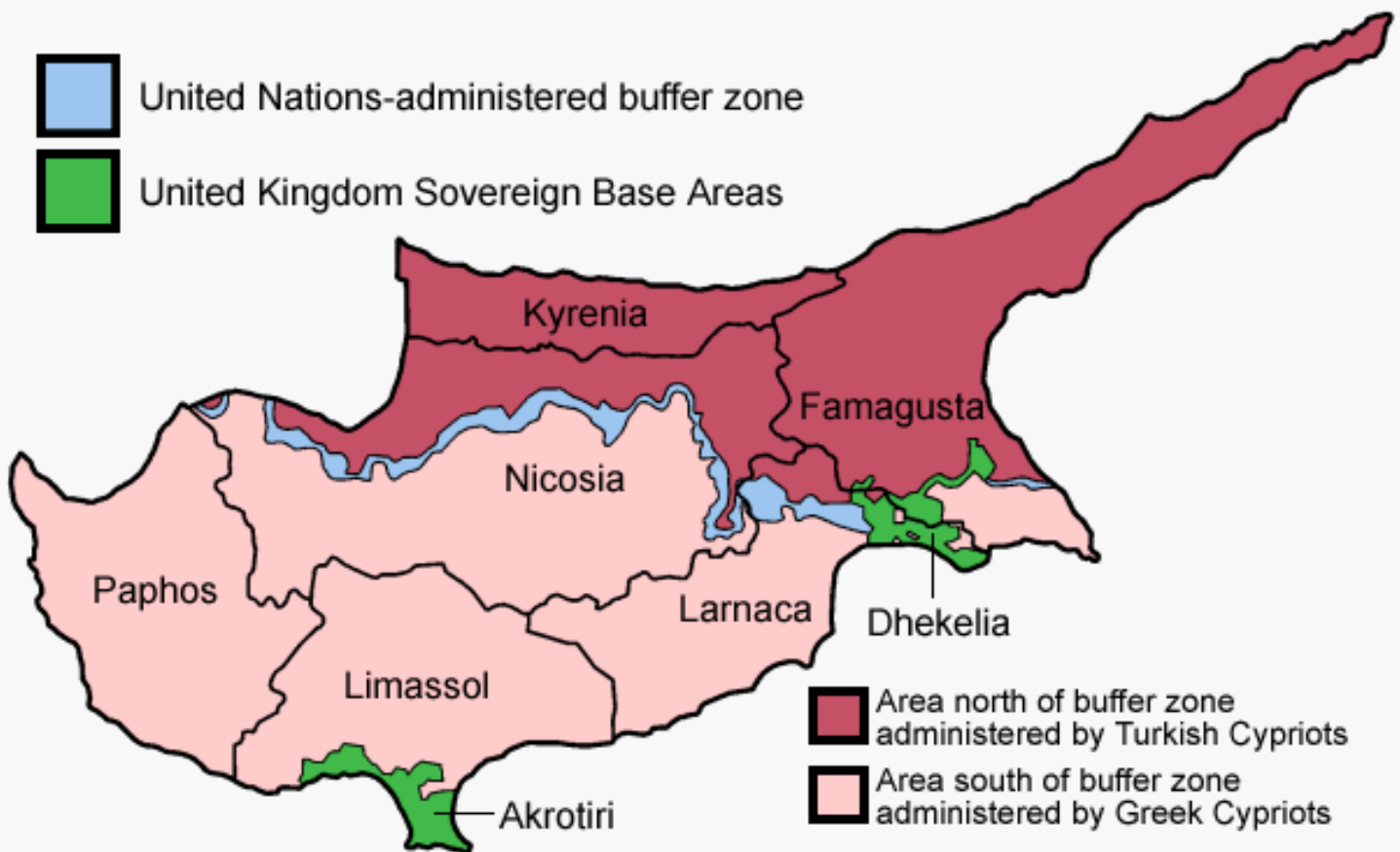
■ News in Brief

Bilateral and international relations

New chances for peace in Cyprus

■ The negotiations on a solution for Cyprus, divided since 1974, continued in Mont Pelerin in Switzerland from 7-11 November, under the aegis of UN. The main participants in the negotiations were the president of Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Anastasiadis and the leader of the non-recognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mustafa Akinci. Both Presidents are

seeking a solution for the long-going conflict. On the third day Cyprus peace talks entered a critical stage, namely territorial adjustments, a key issue for the unification. The chapter security and guarantees, the last sticking point between the two parties, would be attended by Turkey, Greece and United Kingdom. This summit will take place if Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots reach an agreement on territorial issue.



Map of the districts of Cyprus, showing the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, United Kingdom Sovereign Base Areas, and United Nations buffer zone. Image: Golbez [Wikimedia Commons]



Russia is no longer part of United Nations Human Rights Council

■ Russia is being held responsible for war crimes in Syria. Human rights activists had specifically asked to reject the candidacies of Russia and Saudi Arabia, which has been accused of attacks against civilians in Yemen. While Saudi Arabia received the votes Guatemala was the only country not to receive the votes along Russia. Louis Charbonneau, UN director at Human Rights Watch stated “in rejecting Russia’s bid for re-election to the Human Rights Council, UN member states have sent a strong message to the Kremlin about its support for a regime that has perpetrated so much atrocity in Syria.”

Venezuela creates Hugo Chávez peace prize, awards to Russia’s Putin

■ The president of Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro announced the following statement in a television broadcast: “I’ve decided to create the Hugo Chavez Prize for peace and sovereignty”, and also said that he awarding it to the president of Russia, Vladimir Putin. The publication of the prize was on the same day that the annual Peace Prize was awarded to Juan Manuel Santos, president of neighbouring

Columbia by the Nobel committee, for his role in negotiating a peace agreement with Marxist FARC rebels. This idea and its efforts was considered ridicule by critics of the Ruling Socialist party, moreover, US formally accused Putin’s government of war crimes regarding its bombing of Aleppo. On the other hand, Maduro is on the point that President Vladimir Putin deserves the award as a “fighter for peace”.

WikiLeaks’ Assange signals release of documents before US election

■ WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange said, that the group would publish provocative documents in connection with the US presidential elections and three governments before the 8th of November. Despite he criticised Hillary Clinton for demonising his team’s work, Assange denied that the content of the documents are against Clinton to damage her campaign. He said the content (besides the US election) would focus on mass surveillance, weapons and war, oil issues and on the technology giant Google. He declined to give any details. Assange says there will be changes in the way of the funds and organisations of WikiLeaks. In Berlin he told the media that the group’s work will still remain even if he has to resign in the future, so he appealed to supporters to fund his work.





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