

NEWS

Kucinich asks UN to hold nations accountable for civilian deaths in Libya

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio), an outspoken critic of U.S. military involvement in Libya, on Thursday called on the United Nations to ensure that governments are held accountable for civilian deaths in Libya under operations authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1973.

In his Thursday letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Kucinich cited press reports that said Libyan authorities are accusing North Atlantic Treaty Organization



Dennis Kucinich

(NATO) forces of killing 85 villagers in air strikes, including 33 children. “If such reports are true, it further highlights the increased risks to civilians that has occurred as a result of military intervention in Libya and is further evidence that continued bombing by NATO under the context of UNSCR 1973 is an inappropriate tool to protect civilians or force Moammar Gaddafi from power,” Kucinich wrote.

“Who is NATO accountable to?” he asked. “How can they continue to cause the deaths of innocent civilians under the color of international law and not be held accountable?”

Kucinich said the absence of any warning from the UN to NATO “makes a mockery of UN resolutions which are allegedly aimed at protecting innocent civilians from organized violence.”

“I reiterate my requests that the UN take immediate action to hold member states and their NATO extension accountable for actions in Libya that violate UN Security Council Resolutions that place innocent civilians at risk,” he wrote.

(Source: thehill.com)

China bars foreign visitors ahead of Lama visit

BEIJING (AP) — China is barring foreign visitors from staying in a county in northwestern China and stepping up security ahead of an expected visit to a monastery by the government-appointed Panchen Lama.

Hotels in Xiahe county in Gansu province near the Labrang Monastery said Friday they received notices this week not to accept any foreigner visitors.

The International Campaign for Tibet said security in the area has been increased near the monastery ahead of the Panchen Lama’s visit in the coming days.

The Panchen Lama is the second-ranked religious leader to Tibetans, after the Dalai Lama. But Tibetans generally do not accept this Panchen Lama because he was picked by Beijing, while the original boy named by the Dalai Lama has disappeared.

Giant tent erected over Japan nuclear reactor

TOKYO (AP) — The operator of Japan’s damaged Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant is building a huge tent to cover one of the worst-hit reactors.

Officials hope the cover will keep leaked radioactive materials from spreading, prevent rainwater seepage and offer a barrier from further leaks.

The tent is being erected to provide a temporary replacement for the No. 1 reactor’s outer housing shell, which was destroyed in an explosion caused by high pressure the day after Japan’s deadly earthquake and tsunami on March 11.

A spokesman for the power utility Koji Watanabe said Friday that construction began this week.

Former Gbagbo aide launches new I. Coast party

The former number two of disgraced Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo’ regime on Thursday launched his own party, a month after resigning as head of the ex-leader’s political movement.

“We are a party in opposition to the regime of president” Alassane Ouattara, Gbagbo’s successor, said Mamadou Koulibaly who was speaker of the West African country’s National Assembly from 2001.

Koulibaly broke with Gbagbo’s Ivorian People’s Front (FPI) last month for refusing to accept change after a drawn-out political crisis and said he would join a new party.

He told hundreds of members of his new Freedom and Democracy for the Republic (Lider) that foreigners had their place in troubled Ivory Coast after decades of inter-ethnic strife which came to a head in the December-April standoff between Gbagbo and Ouattara following presidential elections in November.

“Foreigners are an opportunity for us,” he said.

Lider intends to take part in legislative elections due by the end of the year and supports the introduction of a parliamentary system in which the president would have a minor role.

Koulibaly said Ivory Coast should do away with a “system of the king-president” to one in which the “president is the servant”.

A liberal economist and nationalist, Koulibaly also called for the introduction of a currency that would replace the CFA franc which has close ties to former colonial power France.

(Source: AFP)

Egypt moves to scrap decades-old emergency law

CAIRO (Reuters) — Egypt has begun procedures to end the country’s three-decade old state of emergency, the government said Thursday, a key demand of the protesters who ousted President Hosni Mubarak in February.

The cabinet said it would abide by a pledge to end emergency rule, which gave Mubarak’s hated police sweeping powers to crush dissent, before parliamentary elections expected in November.

“The government has decided to start the procedures needed to end the state of emergency, in coordination with the military council,” cabinet spokesman Mohamed Hegazy said.

Rights campaigners say the continued emergency powers are an anachronism in post-Mubarak Egypt that saps the credibility of the interim government as a force for democratic change.

Days of street protests broke out in July, fueled partly by perceptions that the security forces had not been brought to account for the brutal treatment of protesters during the 18-day uprising against Mubarak and that abuses were continuing.

Human rights activist Negad al-Borai said, “This is empty talk. The situation in Egypt is horrible and I no longer care if the government says it will remove or keep the emergency law. The issue is to what extent the government is willing to respect human rights.”

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■ “Empty talk”

Some Egyptians say the police are trying to change their high-handed ways and have at least become more polite to the public. Others say that, inside police stations, intimidation, bullying and disregard for human rights are as common as ever.

The emergency law, introduced in



Thousands of Egyptians protest at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, July 29, to show unity during a fragile transition from ousted president Hosni Mubarak’s regime.

1981 after the assassination of President Anwar Sadat, allowed the police to hold people for months without charge.

Scrapping it will force the police to respect due procedure and the presumption of innocence – in theory.

“This is empty talk,” said human rights activist Negad al-Borai. “The situation in Egypt is horrible and I no longer care if the government says it will remove or keep the emergency law. The issue is to what extent the government is willing to respect human rights.”

Amnesty International in April urged Egypt to scrap the law in an 80-page report called “Time for Justice: Egypt’s corrosive system of detention.”

It listed brutal treatment of detainees that included beatings, electric shocks, suspension by the wrists and ankles for long periods, sleep deprivation and death threats.

Mubarak-era officials brushed off concerns about human rights abuses as unproven allegations or isolated incidents that did not prove any pattern of abuse.

Mubarak, his sons and former Interior Minister Habib el-Adli are now on trial on charges of graft and ordering

the killing of protesters during the uprising. They deny the accusations.

■ Tensions over constitution

Under Mubarak, police would pounce on even small protests, shove demonstrators into vans and cart them away for detention.

Today the authorities can no longer ignore the power of the street. Liberals and those with little political allegiance often turn out by the thousand to press for fair elections, access to services and an end to police brutality.

But disputes over the founding principles of post-Mubarak Egypt – especially the role of the army and religion – offer a challenge for the ruling generals trying to reconcile the aspirations of opposing, and often hostile, political groups.

Deputy Prime Minister Ali al-Silimi said the government was drafting a document of constitutional principles that could be implemented before the elections if agreed upon by different political groups and public opinion, newspapers reported.

“A constitutional decree could be issued before the coming parliamentary elections which could be won by one party or more,” al-Masry al-Youm quoted Silimi as saying Thursday.

Another female suicide bomber strikes in Pakistan, Taliban desperation?

Security experts believe the Taliban is facing internal strife, and the use of female suicide bombers could be a signal that Taliban efforts inside Pakistan are weakening.

Two bombings, including one carried out by a female suicide bomber, claimed at least seven lives in the Pakistani city of Peshawar on Thursday. The incident is believed to be only the third time a woman has been used as a suicide bomber in Pakistan.

Analysts say the use of women in suicide attacks is a sign of militants’ desperation to carry out high-level attacks as they face pressure from the Pakistan Army as well as internal strife. It could also complicate security efforts as officials have been reluctant to search women.

“It’s generally men who are stopped at all the checkpoints, so now they’re using women and children,” says Raza Rumi, a Pakistani columnist.

The first of the attacks took place when a remote-controlled bomb exploded near a police vehicle, according to media reports.

Some hours later, a teenage female suicide bomber blew herself up near the first site.

“This was a female suicide bomber aged around 17 or 18 who threw a hand grenade on the police check post, about 20 meters away from the site of the first blast, and then blew herself up,” police of-



Policemen use a magnet to collect pellets from the site of a suicide bomb attack in Peshawar August 11. (Khuram Parvez/Reuters)

ficial Shafqat Malik told the AFP.

The Taliban have not yet claimed responsibility, but are widely believed to be behind the attack.

The incident, which was the first bombing in the Taliban-afflicted province since the Islamic holy month of Ramadan began, marks only the third instance of a female suicide bomber in Pakistan ever.

In December 2010, a woman blew herself up at a World Food Program distribution point in the Tribal Area of FATA, killing about 45 people. In late June, a married Uzbek-couple blew up a police station killing

10 policemen.

The Taliban have failed lately to carry out the high-profile attacks involving heavy loss of civilian life in Pakistan’s major cities that they were able to pull off in 2008 and 2009. Before this instance, the militancy-afflicted Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province had remained largely peaceful for more than a month.

According to Rumi, the columnist, the Pakistani Taliban are on the defensive as they battle the Pakistani military on several fronts. Pakistan’s Army is currently engaged in major operations against Taliban militants in Kurram, Mohmand, and South Waziristan tribal agencies.

Security experts also believe the group is facing internal strife, and has been forced to shift its base of operations from North Waziristan to Orakzai after being forced out of their former stronghold by tribal leader Hafiz Gul Bahadur, an ally of the Pakistani military.

Ayesha Siddiqi, an expert on the Pakistani military, says conservative sensibilities in Pakistan make it difficult for a security officials to stop and search women.

“In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa it becomes difficult. You need to raise a big force of women police and train them [to carry out the checks]. Short and medium term there is no solution.”

(Source: The Christian Science Monitor)

UK riots: Gaddafi calls on David Cameron to step down over rioting

Col Muammar Gaddafi has used the riots as pre-text for a bizarre call on David Cameron to step down because, he claimed, the prime minister was unfit to govern after unleashing “violent repression” on “peaceful protesters”.

The Libyan leader, at war with rebels and a British-led NATO campaign after he used the military in an attempt to crush protests, attempted to turn the tables on Cameron.

Khaled Kaaim, Libya’s deputy foreign minister, accused the government of having declared war on the British people.

“Cameron and his government must leave after the popular uprising against them and the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations by police,” said Kaaim.

“Cameron and his government have lost all legiti-



Col Muammar Gaddafi has called on David Cameron to stand down. Photo: GETTY IMAGES/PA

macy. These demonstrations show that the British people reject this government, which is trying to impose itself through force.”

In a caricature of the Western response in February when the Libyan regime massacred its opponents by using aircraft and tanks against demonstrators, Kaaim called on the UN Security Council to act to prevent a “flagrant violation of the rights of the British people”.

“This savage treatment of people is absolutely unacceptable, and British statesmen must hear the voice of the people and grant them freedoms,” he said. “British politicians should look to help their own people instead of invading Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya to plunder their oil.”

(Source: The Telegraph)