



OUAGADOUGOU (PRESS TV) – Two dozen people have been killed and over 620 others injured in violent protests held during the uprising that toppled the longtime president of Burkina Faso on October 31.

Two days of protests that led to the resignation of Burkina Faso's former president, Blaise Compaoré, in late October resulted in 24 deaths, whose causes included gunshot wounds, serious burns or suffocation, said a committee appointed by Prime Minister Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida on Wednesday.

The revolt witnessed heavy damage of property, including 14 public buildings which were destroyed, while shops were pillaged, said Clarisse Merindol-Ouoba, head of the government-appointed committee probing the violence.

Demonstrators raided the parliament building and other buildings, ransacking offices and setting fire to cars.

An initial death toll was put at 30 by the opposition, while diplomatic sources said 15 people were killed.

On October 31, the military took control in the power vacuum after Compaoré resigned following nearly 30 years in power.

The former president was forced to step down following mass protests against his attempts to change the constitution to extend his rule for a fifth term. Compaoré first took power in a coup in 1987 and emerged victorious in the next four elections.

STRASBOURG, France (Reuters) – The European Commission presented a plan on Wednesday for some 300 billion euros (\$375 billion) of largely private new investment in the European Union, saying it was time to kick-start growth without adding to public debt.

Underlining the need to pursue structural reforms to ailing economies and pare back debt and deficits run up during the financial crisis, the EU's new chief executive said his plan was the third leg of a strategy to get Europeans back to work.

"Europe needs a kick-start and today the Commission is applying the jump leads," Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, a conservative former prime minister of Luxembourg who took office this month, told the European Parliament.

He acknowledged criticism that the plan lacks a major new public spending component. The EU is setting aside just 8 billion euros and the European Investment Bank 5 billion to help provide 21 billion euros of capital for a special fund to be managed with the EIB.

The cash is to unlock 300 billion euros of investment over the next three years to create a million jobs.

The parliament's main political groups cautiously welcomed the plan, saying that while they would have liked the capital of the investment fund to be higher, it was still a good start.

But far right and left-wing deputies and the Greens criticised it, saying the leverage effect of 15 times was a fantasy and that it made risks public and profits private.

HARARE (Press TV) – Zimbabwe's Vice President Joice Mujuru, who has been accused of plotting a coup against President Robert Mugabe, has reportedly been disqualified for running for membership in the central committee of the country's ruling party.

Mujuru's election papers were rejected by a provincial executive committee ahead of a key congress of the ruling ZANU-PF party, which will be held next week, media reported on Wednesday.

Mujuru's home district "rejected her application in elections that saw a number of other ZANU-PF bigwigs linked to her nefarious activities to oust... Mugabe also failing to make it," the reports said.

Pro-government newspapers have continuously attacked Mujuru, as factions within the ruling party struggle to take power after the death or resignation of 90-year-old Mugabe.

On November 17, Mujuru defended herself against allegations that she masterminded a plot to assassinate Mugabe. Rejecting the claims as "entirely untrue", Mujuru said in a statement she was ready to defend herself against accusations in a court of law.

Ukraine Crisis Needs Diplomacy, Germany's Merkel Says

BERLIN (PRESS TV) – German Chancellor Angel Merkel says diplomacy can serve as the only way to settle the conflict in Ukraine.

"The path may be difficult and long, but I am convinced that we will make it," Merkel said in an address to a session of the Bundestag (the lower house of parliament) in the capital, Berlin, on Wednesday.

Expressing Germany's readiness to help reach a solution with Russia on Ukraine's crisis, she also accused Moscow of violating international law and putting the European order in jeopardy over the issue.

Elsewhere in her remarks, the German chancellor stated that Western economic sanctions against Russia remain inevitable, adding, "We need patience and to be consistent."

Tensions between Moscow and the West heightened in March fol-

lowing a decision by Ukraine's then autonomous region of Crimea to join the Russian Federation.

The move sparked angry reactions from the United States and the European Union, both of which imposed several rounds of punitive measures against Moscow over the crisis in Ukraine, targeting the country's banking, energy and defense sectors. Russia, for its part, has also imposed retaliatory bans.

Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking parts in the east have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Russia activists and the Ukrainian army since mid-April.

According to the latest figures by the United Nations, more than 4,000 people have been killed and some 10,000 others wounded over the past months of conflict between the Ukrainian army and the pro-Russians.

Cameroon Army Frees 16 Hostages

YAOUNDE (Reuters) – A Cameroonian army operation has freed 16 hostages, including Polish Catholic priest Mateusz Dziedzic, who were abducted by rebels from Central African Republic last month, Cameroon's government said on Wednesday.

"A special operation of Cameroonian defense and security forces permitted the liberation last night of 15 Cameroonian hostages... as well as the Polish priest Mateusz Dziedzic," the statement said.

The head of the organization that runs Poland's overseas Catholic missions had said a rebel group known as the Democratic Front of the Central African People (FDPC) abducted Dziedzic on the night of Oct. 12 in neighboring Central Af-

rican Republic.

The FDPC, one of a number of armed groups that has fought the Central African government and other militants in an off-on conflict in the former French colony over the past decade, had demanded Cameroon release its leader Abdoulaye Miskine.

It was not immediately clear if this condition had been met.

The FDPC was initially allied with Seleka, a coalition of local rebels that also included fighters from neighboring Sudan and Chad which toppled the Central African government and seized the capital Bangui in March 2013.

After falling out with Seleka, Miskine fled to Cameroon and was arrested there in September 2013.

Greek Journalists Stage 24-Hour Strike



Greek protesters shout slogans during a demonstration outside the parliament in Athens, March 30, 2014.

ATHENS (PRESS TV) – Journalists in Greece have gone on a 24-hour strike before a general strike against austerity measures in the country.

As a result of the strike, radio and television stations in Greece pulled all newscasts off the air on Wednesday. Websites covering current affairs were also not updated from 6 a.m. on Wednesday.

Moreover, no newspaper will be published on Thursday.

According to reports, schools will remain closed and transportation systems, including ferries and flights, will not operate, and hospitals will provide only emergency services due to the general strike

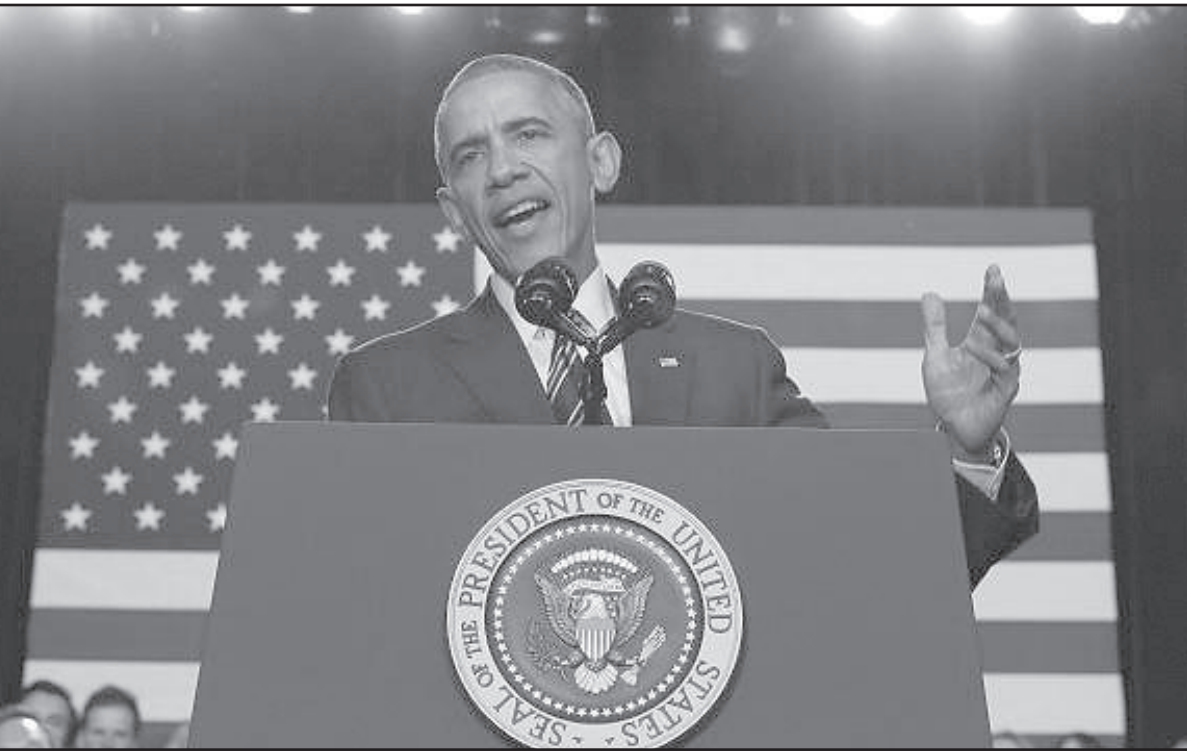
on Thursday.

The general strike will be the latest rally in a series of similar anti-austerity industrial action in Greece over the past few months.

Early in November, a massive rally was organized by trade union PAME with dozens of other unions participating to condemn the austerity policies of the government.

Greece has witnessed three years of austerity policies imposed by the government in a bid to win bailout loans from international creditors, including the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Commission.

UN Investigators Urge Obama to Release CIA Report



U.S. President Barack Obama

NEW YORK (Reuters) – United Nations human rights investigators called on President Barack Obama to live up to principles preached by the United States around the world and release a long completed report on CIA interrogation methods.

In an open letter issued in Geneva, the seven investigators and academic legal experts, said publication of the report by a Senate committee would be welcomed by victims of torture and their supporters everywhere.

Among the signatories were the world body's special rapporteurs for torture and for freedom of expression.

"As a nation that has publicly affirmed its belief that respect for truth

advances respect for the rule of law, and as a nation that frequently calls for transparency and accountability in other countries, the United States must rise to meet the standards it has set both for itself and others," the open letter declared.

The Senate committee spent four years investigating waterboarding and other CIA practices used against terrorism suspects during the administration of former president George W. Bush. In April, it approved its report for release.

But the document has not yet been published, largely because of CIA demands that it be edited to obscure names and patterns of behavior that were crucial "in the system of violations that needs to be understood

and redressed," the open letter said.

The investigators, including one American and three Latin Americans who work at U.S. universities and cover areas like torture, arbitrary execution and freedom of expression, said other countries were closely watching the issue.

"Victims of torture and human rights defenders around the world will be emboldened if you take a strong stand in support of transparency," they told Obama.

"On the contrary, if you yield to the CIA's demands for continued secrecy on this issue, those resisting accountability will surely misuse this decision to bolster their agenda in their own countries," the seven added.

Hong Kong Student Leaders Arrested as Police Clear Protest Site



Policemen clear a protest site on the main Nathan Road, which was occupied by protesters for weeks, at Mong Kok district in Hong Kong November 26, 2014.

HONG KONG (Reuters) – Hong Kong police cleared activists from one of the largest protest sites in the city on Wednesday and arrested Joshua Wong and Lester Shum, two of the student leaders at the heart of the protests that has shaken the Asian financial hub.

Scuffles broke out when riot police moved against hundreds of protesters on Nathan Road, in the gritty Mong Kok district, following clashes overnight, Reuters witnesses said.

"You can't defeat the protesters' hearts!" screamed Liu Yuk-lin, a 52-year-old protester in a hard hat holding a yellow umbrella, the symbol of the movement, as she stood before lines of police in helmets and goggles.

But there was no serious violence, and after about three

hours the operation was complete and traffic was flowing through as area where demonstrators had camped out since late September to call for greater democracy in the former British colony.

Mong Kok has been a flashpoint for clashes between students and mobs intent on breaking up the protests, which have posed one of the biggest challenges to China's Communist Party leaders since the crushing of student-led pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing in 1989.

Crowds nearby cheered and clapped as the final protesters were removed from the site on Wednesday.

Earlier, court-appointed bailiffs had warned protesters to leave and around 80 workers in red caps and "I love Hong Kong" T-shirts began

clearing metal and wooden barricades laid across Nathan Road, where hundreds of tents had been erected in a two-month civil disobedience campaign.

They had been met by hundreds of protesters brandishing yellow banners and chanting for "full democracy".

"If you resist you face possible imprisonment. We warn you to immediately stop resisting," said a policeman into a loud hailer before jeering activists.

Several protesters who resisted were hauled away, witnesses said. Hong Kong's Cable TV said 4,000 police were involved.

A Reuters witness saw police take away Shum, and the Facebook page of the student group Scholarism announced that Wong had been arrested for contempt of court.

Although the protests have had no formal leadership structure, Wong and Shum were part of a group of students who many looked to as the movement's de facto leaders.

The clearance of the Mong Kok site is a big breakthrough in the authorities' efforts to end the most tenacious protest movement in Hong Kong's recent history, although it could trigger retaliatory protests elsewhere as the activists regroup.

"It's not the end," said Helen Lau, a young activist with a leather yellow ribbon around her neck, who was shouting at police and demanding to re-enter the cleared area. "We still have plan B; either to occupy other places or to step up our actions."