

Thousands Rally Against German Far-Right Party



A screen grab from a video released by Ruptly shows demonstrators marching in the western German city of Saarbruecken

SAARBRUCKEN (Press TV)- Thousands of people in Germany have staged a rally against the anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant policies of the country's far-right National Democratic Party (NPD). More than 4,000 demonstrators from 30 organizations, including trade unions, social associations, and youth groups took part in the demonstration against Germany's biggest far-right party in the western city of Saarbrücken on Saturday. The protesters chanted slogans and held banners that read, "No to the NPD Party Day in Saarbruecken," and "School without racism."

The Saturday rally was peaceful and was held on the party's establishment anniversary. The far right party, which was

founded in 1964, holds a single seat in the European Parliament but is not represented in the German parliament. Back in January, German lawmakers tried to outlaw the NDP, but the country's Federal Constitutional Court deemed the party too ineffective to pose a real threat to democracy. Some politicians argue that the country should not legitimize the NPD by allowing it to exist, but others oppose a ban as a counterproductive measure that would merely push its members to turn to underground activities. The NDP and other far-right groups in Germany have strongly criticized the way Berlin has been handling an unprecedented refugee flow into the country. They say lax controls on the entry of the refugees

could create serious problems for the Germans. More than a million people were admitted into Germany as part of an influx of refugees that began to hit Europe in early 2015. Many blame German Chancellor Angela Merkel's liberal asylum policies for the surge in security threats. The criticism forced Berlin to revise criteria for accepting refugees, saying only those from war-ravaged territories, including Syria, would be welcome. German authorities recorded 280,000 refugee arrivals in 2016. Refugee advocates and supporters of Merkel, meanwhile, have called on the government to take stronger action against far-right, nationalist groups, which have carried out numerous attacks on refugees.

S. Africa's Ruling ANC Calls For Unity, End to Graft

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) - South Africa's ruling ANC has called for an end to corruption and division within the party as it battles to reverse declining popularity, according to a policy paper published Sunday. The ANC recorded its worst-ever results in local polls last August and will choose a new leader at the end of this year, ahead of the 2019 general election when President Jacob Zuma must stand down. "The document recognizes that the ANC is increasingly losing trust of the people as illustrated by the declining electoral performance and intense public criticism," ANC policy chief Jeff Radebe said in a speech broadcast on local television. "The organization must act urgently to restore its moral character to win back the trust of the people," he said during a meeting at the ANC's Johannesburg headquarters. Zuma is personally facing a slew of corruption allegations and an ongoing crisis over the payment of welfare benefits that has further tarnished the ANC's reputation. It has also been engulfed by

infighting at the highest level of government. Friction has soared in recent months between Zuma, who is seeking increased expenditure to fund a "radical economic transformation", and Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan who is taking a stand against graft and uncontrolled spending. More than 20 years after the end of apartheid, about 35 percent of the labour force is unemployed or has given up looking for work, and South Africa remains beset by inequality. "The ANC faces declining fortunes. Internal squabbles, money politics, corruption and poor performance in government all conspire to undermine its legitimacy in the eyes of the broader public," warned one of the policy papers. They also called for the presidency to be strengthened as the "strategic centre of power in the state". The discussion documents unveiled on Sunday will form the basis of debates at the party's national conference which will kick off on June 30.

Clash With Police Leaves 21 Injured in Georgian City

TBILISI (AP) — At least 21 people, including 11 police officers, have been injured during a night of rioting in Georgia's second-largest city. The unrest in Batumi started late Saturday. Local news reports said about 1,000 people gathered around the Black Sea coast city's main police station, overturned or set afire about 10 cars and threw stones. The reports say the confrontation

started after police ticketed a motorist for a traffic violation, sparking an argument that attracted people nearby. Officers quelled the riot at about 6 a.m. Sunday. The Interior Ministry said about 40 people were detained. Regional health minister Zaal Mikeladze said on Rustavi-2 television that 21 people had sought hospital treatment, but did not specify the severity of their injuries.

Prudent Merkel Meets Unpredictable Trump Amid Tense Ties



German Chancellor Angela Merkel will meet US President Donald Trump for the first time.

BERLIN (AFP) - Europe's most powerful leader, Angela Merkel, meets for the first time next week America's flamboyant President Donald Trump whose arrival in the White House has sent shockwaves across the Atlantic. While former U.S. president Barack Obama had labelled Merkel his "closest international partner", there has been little known contact between the German leader and Trump since he took office. Trump's criticism of Germany over issues ranging from its record trade surplus to Merkel's liberal refugee stance, as well as his backing for Britain to leave the European Union, have not gone unnoticed in Berlin. A month after U.S. Vice

President Mike Pence delivered a message to Europe underscoring the importance of transatlantic ties, Tuesday's meeting will be scrutinised for clues on whether Trump fully endorses that message. The reserved German leader herself underlined that she is travelling to Washington not only as Germany's leader, but also as an envoy of the EU. The Washington meeting would also allow for "an exchange of bilateral and international topics, and transatlantic ties, as we have always stressed, are very important," added Merkel's spokeswoman Ulrike Demmer. As in other similar tours, Merkel will be accompanied by an army

of business leaders, but this time the delegation faces an uncertain reception as Trump preaches an "America First" policy. Siemens boss Joe Kaeser and BMW's Harald Krueger will be part of the group, according to news weekly Der Spiegel, and both will likely be trumpeting the thousands of jobs linked to their investments in the U.S. Krueger will also be keen to persuade Trump, who has singled out BMW for hefty tariffs if it built a factory in Mexico, to reconsider the threat. But "if the government is serious about its new tax, the chancellery has already prepared a series of retaliatory measures," said Der Spiegel.

134 Foreign Policy Experts Slam New Travel Ban

WASHINGTON (Press TV) - More than 130 foreign policy experts have denounced President Donald Trump's revised immigration order which halts travel from six predominantly Muslim countries. In a letter on Saturday, 134 experts said the revised order would "jeopardize our relationships with allies and partners on whom we rely for vital counter-terrorism cooperation

and information-sharing." The letter was directed to several high-ranking officials including Attorney General Jeff Sessions, Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly and Michael Dempsey, the acting director of national intelligence. The signatories, comprising of former officials, argued that

welcoming Muslim refugees and travelers could help expose lies from terrorists who claim the U.S. is at war with Islam. Trump signed the revised order last week after his January's directive faced multiple challenges in courts across many states. People from Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Libya will face a 90-day entry ban. However, Iraq

was taken off the list because of its cooperation with the U.S. on the fight against Daesh, officials said. The experts further said that many Iraqis who helped the U.S. military during the war would find trouble resettling into the U.S. because of the new changes in the refugee policy. "These individuals were given priority access to U.S. resettlement under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq

Act, but their resettlement, like that of many other vetted refugees, will now likely be delayed as security clearance and other approvals expire, adding many more months onto their processing," the letter said. The letter also noted that following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the U.S. has created a rigorous vetting system for travelers and revised it continuously.



SEOUL (Press TV)-South Korea's impeached President Park Geun-Hye has issued an apology for not completing her full term as she left the presidential complex, two days after the Constitutional Court voted to remove her from office. Park left the presidential complex, the so-called Blue House, shortly after 19:00 local time (10:00 GMT) on Sunday. The ousted president arrived at her private residence in southern Seoul, where she was greeted by hundreds of her supporters.

ADDIS ABABA (AP) — A landslide swept through a massive garbage dump on the outskirts of Ethiopia's capital, killing at least 35 people and leaving several dozen missing, residents said, as officials vowed to relocate those who called the landfill home. Addis Ababa city spokeswoman Dagmawit Moges said most of the dead were women and children, and more bodies were expected to be found in the coming hours. It was not immediately clear what caused Saturday night's landslide at the Koshe Garbage Landfill, which buried several makeshift homes and concrete buildings. The landfill has been a dumping ground for the capital's garbage for more than 50 years.

BARCELONA (AP) — Police in eastern Spain opened an investigation into a suspected human trafficking route after discovering two trucks carrying Iraqi refugees in less than a month. A civil guard spokeswoman told The Associated Press Sunday that an anonymous tip led officers to find eight Iraqis of Kurdish ethnicity, including four children, in the back of a refrigerated truck on a highway near the town of Teruel on Friday. Two parents with their three children between the ages of five to 10, a mother with her two-year-old son, and a man traveling alone were crammed in the truck's refrigerated trailer.

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Weather forecasters on Sunday put the greater New York City area under blizzard watch, saying there was potential for a major winter storm from Monday night into Wednesday with 12 to 18 inches of snow expected. The storm raised the potential for dangerous travel and power outages with damaging wind gusts up to 50 mph possible across eastern Long Island and southeastern Connecticut, the National Weather Service said. The potential for blowing snow and strong winds could lead to "whiteout" conditions with visibility as poor as a quarter mile, the service said. Sub-freezing temperatures were forecast in the upper 20s.