

'1.4 Million Children Face Imminent Death: UNICEF



A Yemeni infant suffering from malnutrition receives treatment at a medical center in Bani Hawat, on the outskirts of the Yemeni capital, Sana'a.

NEW YORK (Press TV) - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has warned that some 1.4 million children suffering from severe malnutrition could die this year from famine across the Horn of Africa.

UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake said in a statement on Tuesday that the international community should move quickly to prevent the famine in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

The UN official also warned against recurrence of east African drought that left 260,000 people starved to death across Somalia and elsewhere in 2011.

"Time is running out for more than a million children," the statement read, adding, "We can still save many lives. The severe malnutrition and looming famine are largely man-made. Our

common humanity demands faster action. We must not repeat the tragedy of the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa."

UNICEF has said that at least 270,000 children in South Sudan are suffering from malnutrition.

The international charity Save the Children warned on Monday that over 1 million children in South Sudan were at risk of starving.

Famine was formally declared on Monday in parts of South Sudan, which has plunged into an all-out ethnic-conflict and civil war since 2013.

UNICEF figures show at least 185,000 children were expected to suffer from acute malnutrition in Somalia this year. However, the figure was likely to rise to 270,000 in the next few months.

Another 462,000 children are

suffering from acute malnutrition in Yemen, where two years of Saudi aggression have claimed the lives of more than 10,000 civilian and caused destruction of infrastructure.

The number of children with acute malnutrition is expected to reach 450,000 this year in militancy-riddled areas of northeastern Nigeria. Some remote areas of Nigeria's Borno state are already affected by famine since late last year and the disaster is likely to continue as aid agencies are unable to reach those in need.

The World Food Program has said that more than 20 million lives are at risk in the next six months across the region.

The international organizations and aid groups say people are already starving to death in all the four countries.

Italy's Renzi Brushes Off Schism, Positions Self for Future



Former Italian Premier Matteo Renzi.

ROME (AP) — Former Italian Premier Matteo Renzi brushed off a threatened schism within his ruling Democratic Party on Tuesday as he positioned himself to retake its leadership three months after suffering a humiliating defeat.

A left-leaning faction within Democrats has threatened to leave ahead of a national parliamentary election later this year or in 2018, and a party meeting Tuesday looked poised to make that re-

bellion permanent. Renzi had stepped down as party leader over the weekend in hopes of getting a new, stronger mandate and urged unity. But by Tuesday, he seemed resigned that the faction led by Pier Luigi Bersani was leaving and said the party must move on.

"If someone wants to leave our community, we are pained by the choice but our mantra remains the same: Come, don't go," Renzi

wrote on his blog. He said he was looking to the future, to the party's upcoming congress and was planning a new TV and social media blitz to get out his ideas.

Renzi resigned as premier after he lost a Dec. 4 referendum on constitutional changes. Premier Paolo Gentiloni has been running a caretaker government until new elections are held. Many in the Democratic Party had bristled at Renzi's arrogant style and had defied him by urging voters to reject the referendum.

Amid the disarray, party founders urged the rebels to rethink, with former Premier Romano Prodi warning that it would be political "suicide" to break away at a time when populist forces are poised to make headway in the next election.

Another ex-premier, Enrico Letta, whom Renzi ousted as premier in a 2014 back-room coup, blamed Renzi for the disarray in the party but urged unity.

"It can't end like this," he pleaded on Facebook. "It's easy to destroy something. Much harder to build it."

Dead Refugees Wash Up on Libyan Beach



Photo provided by The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), shows the bodies of people that washed ashore and were recovered by the Libyan Red Crescent, near Zawiya, Libya.

CAIRO (Dispatches) — At least 74 bodies of African refugees have washed ashore in western Libya, the Libyan Red Crescent said Tuesday, the latest tragedy at sea along a perilous but increasingly popular trafficking route to Europe.

The bodies were found near the western Libyan city of Zawiya on Monday, Red Crescent spokesman Mohammed al-Misrati told The Associated Press, adding that he feared more might surface. He said a torn rubber boat, the kind that usually carry up to 120 people, was found nearby.

The Red Crescent's branch in Zawiya said there are bodies still floating out at sea but it has no means to retrieve them.

The International Organization of Migration said the traffickers took the engine and left the boat to drift. Another 12 refugees remain missing and are "presumed drowned," and a sole survivor was transferred to a hospital in a coma, the U.N. migration agency said on Twitter.

Libyan coast guard spokesman Ayoub Gassim said over 500 refugees were rescued at sea on Friday and Saturday off the coast of Sebratha, a city to the west of Zawiya. The migrants' boats were about 5-7 miles (8-11 kilometers) from the coast.

Gassim said the smugglers pack larger rubber boats with up to 180 people, dramatically increasing the risk of capsizing.

Austria Approves U.S. Extradition for Ukrainian Oligarch



Ukrainian oligarch Dymitro Firtash waits for the start of his trial at the courts of justice in Vienna, Austria.

VIENNA (AP) — An Austrian court on Tuesday approved a U.S. extradition request for a Ukrainian oligarch suspected of paying millions of dollars in bribes to Indian officials.

The court decision overturns a lower court ruling nearly two years ago against extraditing Dymitro Firtash. The judge then said that the U.S. move was at least partially politically motivated through links to political events in Ukraine, and not supported by sufficient evidence.

Extradition, however, is still not a certainty. Leo Levnaic-Iwanski, who headed the three-judge panel of the Upper State Court, said the final decision will be made by Justice Minister Wolfgang Brandstetter.

Firtash was indicted in Chicago by a U.S. grand jury in 2012 for allegedly paying off officials through U.S. banks in a failed attempt to secure titanium mining rights in India worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Arrested a year later in Vienna, he posted bail of 125 million euros

(more than \$130 million) shortly afterward, leaving him free but unable to leave Austria.

One of Ukraine's most influential businessmen, Firtash, 51, is well connected both in Moscow and with Ukrainian politicians opposed to the Kremlin. He earned millions of dollars in the natural gas trading sector under deposed pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich.

News reports tie him to business dealings with lobbyist Paul Manafort, an adviser to Donald Trump during his U.S. presidential election campaign. Manafort also advised Yanukovich during a reelection bid.

Austrian Judge Christoph Bauer suggested in 2015 that the extradition request for Firtash was linked to attempts to weaken Yanukovich by stripping him of a key ally.

A court statement summarizing Tuesday's ruling focused on the U.S. accusations in overturning Bauer's decision, saying "the crimes Firtash is accused of have no political character."

News in Brief

MELBOURNE (Dispatches) - Four U.S. citizens and an Australian pilot have died after their light plane crashed into a shopping centre in Melbourne, Australia.

The charter flight appeared to have had a "catastrophic engine failure" shortly after taking off from the small Essendon Airport, said police.

Despite the destruction, no one was killed or injured on the ground.

Victoria's Premier Daniel Andrews said it was the worst civilian aviation accident in the state in 30 years.

QUITO (AP) — Vote counting in Ecuador's presidential election dragged into a third day Tuesday with ruling party candidate Lenin Moreno still just short of a definitive first-round victory and supporters and opponents of outgoing President Rafael Correa trading heated accusations.

With the last ballots trickling in from Sunday's election, Moreno had a little over 39 percent of the votes and an almost 11-point lead over conservative Guillermo Lasso, a former banker who finished second in a field of nine candidates. But Moreno remained just under a point below the 40 percent threshold needed to avoid an April runoff.

It was the first time in recent memory that Ecuadorean authorities had not declared a winner on election night, leading Lasso and many of his supporters to charge that an attempt at fraud was underway as Correa's leftist movement sought to hold onto power at a time the rest of South America has shifted to the right. But Lasso's side did not present any evidence of irregularities.

BAKU (AP) — Azerbaijan's president on Tuesday appointed his wife as the first vice president of the ex-Soviet nation — the person next in line in the nation's power hierarchy.

Ilham Aliyev, 55 named his wife Mehriban, 52, to the position created after a constitutional referendum in September. Mehriban, who married her husband when she was 19, graduated from a medical university. She has served previously as a lawmaker and headed a charity.

The constitutional amendments approved at the referendum introduced the positions of two vice presidents, one of them the first vice president.

WASHINGTON (Press TV) - More than 100 migrant workers across the U.S. have reportedly been fired from their jobs after participating in "Day Without Immigrants" protest last week.

Business owners fired the workers after they skipped a day and stayed at home on Thursday to highlight the contributions of immigrants in the country, amid President Donald Trump's sweeping measures to curb immigration, U.S. media reported on Monday.

Restaurants, child care centers and construction companies in states like Florida, Tennessee, Oklahoma and New York were among the many businesses that axed their employees.