

# 50,000 Greeks Rally Over Macedonia Name Row



Protesters take part in a rally against the use of the term "Macedonia" in any solution to a dispute between Athens and Skopje over the former Yugoslav republic's name, in Thessaloniki, Greece, on Jan. 21, 2018.

THESSALONIKI, GREECE (AFP) -- More than 50,000 protesters massed in the streets of northern Greece's biggest city, Thessaloniki, on Sunday, police said, in a long-running row between Athens and Skopje over the use of the name Macedonia.

Athens argues that the name Macedonia suggests that Skopje has territorial claims to the northern Greek region of the same name, of which Thessaloniki is the capital.

The region was the center of Alexander's ancient kingdom, a source of Greek pride.

Hardline clerics, far-right lead-

ers and Greek diaspora groups had called for rallies, with the turnout exceeding media estimates of 30,000.

Gathered around the statue of Alexander in Thessaloniki were members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and local clergy.

Representatives from the main opposition party, New Democracy, were also present despite a tacit order from its liberal-minded leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis to boycott the protests.

Cretans in traditional costumes who travelled from the southern island with their horses, as well as people from northern Greece wear-

ing costumes from the Macedonian wars era a century ago, crowded at the White Tower on the Thessaloniki waterfront from early in the morning.

Greece and Macedonia returned to the United Nations last week hoping to reach a compromise that could end the 27-year dispute over the former Yugoslav republic's name.

Greece's objections to the use of the name Macedonia since the Balkan country's independence in 1991 have hampered the tiny nation's bid to join the European Union and NATO.

"We demand that the term Macedonia isn't included in the name which they will agree on. This is not negotiable," said Mr Leonardou, a 59-year-old writer from Thessaloniki, warning that if the Greek government does otherwise, "There will be an answer from the Greek people".

The UN negotiator Matthew Nimetz - a 24-year veteran on the issue - said last week that he was "very hopeful" that a solution was within reach.

Despite the nationalist fervor that is also being fed by Golden Dawn, Greeks appear to be less militant on the issue than in the past.

In 1992, more than one million people - 10% of the population - joined a rally in Thessaloniki to proclaim that "Macedonia is Greek".

## Make-or-Break Talks on Merkel's Coalition Gov't



This file photo taken on November 21, 2017 shows German Chancellor Angela Merkel looking on during a session at the Bundestag lower house of Parliament in Berlin.

BONN, Germany (AFP) -- Social Democrat leader Martin Schulz made an impassioned appeal to his party Sunday to give the go-ahead for formal coalition talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, a move that would bring Germany a step closer to a stable government.

Schulz is facing a backlash from the Social Democrats' (SPD) left and youth wings, which argue the party should reinvent itself in opposition after scoring its worst election result in September since Germany became a federal republic in 1949.

Speaking in Bonn, where late SPD chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt earned reputations as international statesmen while ruling former West Germany, Schulz implored delegates to allow the SPD to serve as Merkel's junior coalition partner again - a sign of how far the party's fortunes have fallen.

"The SPD must and will be visible, audible and recognizable!" Schulz, sounding hoarse after a week of lobbying delegates, said to loud applause at the packed World Conference Center in the former capital city.

"We ask for your consent to start coalition negotiations."

Around 600 delegates met at the special party congress in Bonn to debate and vote on whether their leaders should push ahead with formal coalition talks on renewing an alliance with Merkel's conservatives that took office in 2013.

The two blocs, which both bled support

to the far right in the Sept. 24 election, struck a preliminary deal earlier this month after exploratory talks, but critics, including the party's youth wing leader Kevin Kuehnert, say the blueprint does not bear enough of the SPD's hallmarks.

A copy of the motion on which delegates were to vote, seen by Reuters, included language on SPD leaders reaching "concrete, effective improvements" to the blueprint but did not make a final vote on the coalition deal conditional on achieving these.

The envisaged improvements would see concessions on labor, health and migration policies, the motion showed.

"We will fight for further improvements in the coalition negotiations if we can continue the talks," Schulz said.

Sunday's vote was being watched abroad as Germany has Europe's largest economy and Merkel has long played a leading role in the continent's economic and security affairs.

"Without the SPD, there will be no bold impulses for the future of Europe," said Schulz, 62, a former president of the European Parliament. "It is up to us."

Arriving for Sunday's congress, SPD parliamentary leader Andrea Nahles told Reuters she was "cautiously optimistic".

A negative vote by the SPD would prolong Germany's political deadlock - already four months old - just as its European partners are looking to Berlin for leadership on European Union reform in light of Britain's decision to leave the bloc.

## Trump's Rhetoric Similar to That of Daesh: London Mayor



London Mayor Sadiq Khan

LONDON (Dispatches) -- London Mayor Sadiq Khan has compared U.S. President Donald Trump's rhetoric against Islam to tactics used by Daesh to inspire terror attacks in Western cities.

In an interview with the Intercept, Khan said Daesh terrorists seek "an increase of Islamophobic attacks; they want a backlash against proud Muslims, proud westerners."

Khan, who has exchanged barbs with Trump in the past, said the U.S. president's language was

against his retweets that he was amplifying a message of division and hatred, and he should be condemned for that," Khan said of Trump.

The mayor also said that it "beggared belief" that Prime Minister Theresa May's invitation to Trump for a state visit to the UK had not been withdrawn following the retweets of Fransen's hateful posts.

Khan stressed that the U.S. president should not be granted a state visit because "there are too many things that he believes that we disagree with."

"One of the reasons I spoke out

very similar to the rhetoric used by so-called Isis/Daesh."

The comments were in reference to Trump re-tweeting of a series of Islamophobic posts by Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of the far-right group Britain First, who has been accused of hate speech.

The London mayor pointed out that Thomas Mair who killed Labor MP Jo Cox in 2015 repeatedly shouted out "Britain first" as he shot and stabbed the lawmaker.

"One of the reasons I spoke out

## One Killed as Honduran Police, Protesters Clash



Police are deployed during a protest against the re-election of Honduras' President Juan Orlando Hernandez in Tegucigalpa, Honduras January 20, 2018.

TEGUCIGALPA (Reuters) -- Honduran soldiers and police clashed with protesters blocking roads across the Central American country on Saturday, as discontent continues to fester nearly two months after a disputed presidential election.

At least one person died as security forces launched tear gas against rock-throwing supporters of the center-left Opposition Alliance Against the Dictatorship and tried to clear impromptu roadblocks of burning tires they had set across the capital Tegucigalpa and around the country, according to police sources and TV images.

Honduras, a poor, violent country that has long sent vulnerable migrants north to the United States, has been embroiled in a political crisis since the Nov. 26 election, which the opposition says was stolen by center-right President Juan Orlando Hernandez. At least 31 people have died in violent protests.

"Out with JOH, out with the dictator," masked protesters shouted in Tegucigalpa's Miraflores neighborhood.

A local NGO said a 60-year-old man died and another person was wounded when military police opened fire on

protesters blocking a road in the town of Saba, 210 km (130 miles) northeast of the capital.

A security ministry spokesman told local media that the incident was being investigated. Twelve people had been arrested across the country, he said, adding that three police officers and a soldier were injured in the protests.

The Honduran electoral tribunal declared Hernandez, a staunch U.S. ally, winner of the election last month despite strident protests over the vote count.

Initially, the vote tally had clearly favored center-left opposition candidate Salvador Nasralla, but it swung in favor of the incumbent after a 36-hour delay.

Hernandez is due to take office on Jan. 27.

"We have to stay in the streets," said former President Manuel Zelaya, who was ousted in a 2009 coup and is one of the opposition leaders.

"If they move us from one spot, we have to move to another. We need to be permanently mobilized to keep up the pressure and prevent the dictator from installing himself."

## At Least Five Killed in Protests Against Kabila

KINSHASA (AFP) -- At least five people were killed in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Sunday, the UN said, as the authorities cracked down on a banned protest against President Joseph Kabila.

Witnesses said security forces fired live rounds and tear gas in Kinshasa to disperse demonstrators who gathered after Catholic church leaders called for a mass peaceful demonstration against Kabila's 17-year rule.

In all, the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO said at least five people were killed in Kinshasa and 33 others injured nationwide, while 69 people were arrested.

A 16-year-old girl died after shots were fired from an armored vehicle at the entrance to a church in the Kitambo area of the capital, Jean-Baptiste Sondji, a former minister and government opponent, told AFP.

Sunday's bloody crackdown comes three weeks after a similar march on New Year's Eve ended in deadly violence, during which organizers said a dozen people were killed.

Tensions were also reported by AFP journalists in the major cities of Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Goma, Beni and

Mbuji Mayi.

The internet, email and social media messaging networks were cut in the capital ahead of the march, as security forces installed roadblocks on major routes and armed officers conducted ID checks.

The church had called for rallies around the country despite a government ban on all demonstrations since September 2016, when anti-Kabila protests turned violent.

The head of the Muslim community, Cheikh Ali Mwinyi M'Kuu had urged the authorities on Saturday to allow the march to take place.

"If they decide to repress, there will be no peace. But if they let the march take place, they will respect the constitution and peace will prevail."

The previous anti-Kabila march, on December 31, descended into a bloody crackdown after police and security forces opened fire on demonstrators.

Protest organizers said 12 people were killed, while the United Nations reported at least five dead. The authorities said no deaths that day were linked to the demonstration.



MOSCOW (Reuters) -- There are no talks yet about any potential new meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying Sunday by state run RIA news agency. Putin will have a chance to speak with Trump on the sidelines of upcoming international events but nothing is planned in the near future, Peskov said. "So this is more a mid-term perspective ... The second part of the year," RIA quoted him as saying.

TRUJILLO, Peru (Reuters) -- A key U.S. cardinal distanced himself from comments by Pope Francis on sexual abuse, saying they had caused "great pain," a remarkable move pointing to divisions in the Roman Catholic Church over how to treat accusers. The implicit public rebuke of the pope by one of his top advisers came after two days of pointed attacks from victims and their advocates, and was another setback for Francis' attempts to come to grips with sexual abuse in the Church. Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston said in an unusually blunt statement that "it is understandable" that the pope's comments in Chile on Thursday were "a source of great pain for survivors of sexual abuse by clergy or any other perpetrator." In response to a question from a reporter on accusations against Juan Barros, a Chilean bishop appointed by the pope in 2015 who is accused of protecting a pedophile, the pope said: "The day I see proof against Bishop Barros, then I will talk. There is not a single piece of evidence against him. It is all slander. Is that clear?" The pope's comments appearing to dismiss the credibility of accusers was widely criticized by victims, their advocates and newspaper editorials in Chile and the pope's native Argentina.

BEIJING (AFP) -- Beijing said it had dispatched a warship to drive away a U.S. missile destroyer which had "violated" its sovereignty by sailing close to a shoal in the disputed South China Sea. The USS Hopper sailed within 12 nautical miles of Huangyan Island on the night of January 17 without alerting Beijing, the foreign ministry said, referring to the shoal by its Chinese name. Also known as Scarborough Shoal, the ring of reefs lies about 230 kilometers from the Philippines in the South China Sea, where Beijing's claims are hotly contested by other nations. The U.S. vessel "violated China's sovereignty and security interests," and put the safety of nearby Chinese vessels "under grave threat," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said. China's defense ministry said in a separate statement that a Chinese frigate "immediately took actions to identify and verify the U.S. ship and drove it away by warning" it.

MONTEGO BAY, Jamaica (AFP) -- Jamaica has declared a state of emergency in the island's second city Montego Bay, where authorities are battling to stem a wave of killings. Tourists have been urged to remain in their resorts following the declaration by Prime Minister Andrew Holness on Thursday, resulting in the deployment of thousands of members of the military and police in the city of 200,000, home to some of the biggest and most luxurious resorts on the island. The move came days after the United States upgraded its travel advisory to its citizens. Canada and Great Britain issued warnings following the declaration of emergency. Montego Bay has seen its murder rate rise over several years with a record 335 deaths in 2017, most tied to gang violence, and an illegal lottery scam that has fleeced hundreds of mostly older Americans out of millions of dollars. Jamaica, with a population of 2.7 million, recorded 43 murders per 100,000 in 2015, one of the world's highest rates.

LOS ANGELES (AFP) -- Leading Zimbabwe opposition figure Roy Bennett, one of longtime president Robert Mugabe's most outspoken critics, has died in a helicopter crash in a remote area of the US state of New Mexico, authorities said Thursday. He was 60. Bennett was killed along with his wife Heather and three other people after the helicopter went down on Wednesday, New Mexico state police said. A crash survivor called 911 for help but could not say where in the mountainous region the wreckage was located. After a frantic search the crash was found ablaze at a ranch about 16km east of the town of Raton. State police officers at the scene "reported the helicopter wreckage had been engulfed in fire making identification difficult," the NMSF statement read but confirmed that Bennett, 60, and his 55-year-old wife were among the victims. Bennett, who had been largely based in South Africa in recent years, sprang to prominence as the treasurer of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), led by Morgan Tsvangirai.

PARIS (AP) -- France's Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has decided to withdraw Paris's candidacy to host the 2025 World Expo. In comments published Sunday by weekly newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche, Philippe said he has doubts about the economic viability of the project and fear unexpected additional expenses in the context of public budget cuts. He also stresses the lack of private partners involved in the project. The remaining candidates for the 2025 World Expo are Yekaterinburg in Russia, Osaka in Japan and Baku in Azerbaijan. Philippe formally announced his decision in a letter he sent earlier to those organizing Paris's candidacy. Paris will host the 2024 Olympic Games.