

# Oxfam Deputy Head Resigns Over Sex Scandal



Oxfam's chief executive Mark Goldring (L) and Oxfam's chair of trustees Caroline Thomson leave the Department for International Development (DFID) in central London on February 12, 2018.

LONDON (Dispatches) -- British charity Oxfam said Monday that Deputy Chief Executive Penny Lawrence had resigned, taking responsibility for how the organization "failed to act adequately" in response to concerns raised internally about sexual misconduct by some members of staff.

"Over the last few days, we have become aware that concerns were

raised about the behavior of staff in Chad as well as Haiti that we failed to adequately act upon," Lawrence said in a statement.

"It is now clear that these allegations - involving the use of prostitutes and which related to behavior of both the Country Director and members of his team in Chad - were raised before he moved to Haiti."

The resignation comes as Oxfam is battling to save its British government funding after a newspaper reported alleged sexual misconduct by Oxfam staff in Haiti during humanitarian relief operations there following a 2010 earthquake.

A spokesman for the prime minister said Britain's government needs to do more to make charities strengthen safeguarding procedures to ensure the "horrific behavior" of some members of Oxfam International is not repeated.

Theresa May's spokesman told reporters that international aid minister Penny Mordaunt was meeting Oxfam representatives Monday to consider what further steps needed to be taken over a sexual misconduct scandal in Haiti.

"DFID (the Department for International Development) have taken action in this area to try and further strengthen systems to enforce a zero tolerance approach. There are a number of measures they have taken but we want to go further in this area," he said.

## Dutch FM Admits Lying About Putin's 'Greater Russia'



This is a Nov. 16, 2017 file photo of Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs Halbe Zijlstra attending a press conference at the ministry of foreign affairs in Berlin, Germany.

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) -- Dutch Foreign Minister Halbe Zijlstra admitted Monday that he lied about hearing Russian President Vladimir Putin make comments about plans for a "greater Russia."

While election campaigning two years ago, Zijlstra said that in 2006 he had been at Putin's dacha when he heard the Kremlin leader speak of plans for a "greater Russia" which would include some of Russia's neighbors.

"I was tucked away back in the room, but I could clearly hear

Putin's answer to the question about what he considered greater Russia," Zijlstra told a gathering then of his People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, which heads the new Dutch government.

"He said this included Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic states, and, well, Kazakhstan would be 'nice to have'," he said in his speech which was recorded on video.

But Monday he acknowledged he had never been at the meeting with Putin and had heard of the

comments second hand.

"The discussion did take place and someone who was there told me what President Putin said about greater Russia," Zijlstra said in a statement after admitting the lie in an interview with the Dutch daily De Volkskrant.

Zijlstra's admission comes ahead of a scheduled meeting on Wednesday with Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov with relations at a poor ebb since the downing of Malaysia Airlines MH17 in July 2014, with 196 Dutch citizens onboard.

The Dutch have blamed the Russians for the downing of the airplane and are narrowing down their investigation to identify the suspects to be tried in the Netherlands.

Opposition parties called for a debate on Zijlstra's position. But Prime Minister Mark Rutte said that though Zijlstra had made a "big mistake" he remained a credible member of the government and did not have to resign.

Rutte, speaking to reporters, said he did not see relations with Russia deteriorating further. "The Russians know the content of the story is true," he said.

## 'Crypto Mining' Malware Infects Thousands of Computers

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Thousands of websites around the world, including many operated by governments, have been infected by hackers using the sites' computing power to "mine" cryptocurrencies, security researchers said.

The attack is the first major incident made public in which a new breed of hackers took over a large numbers of websites to effectively create currencies like bitcoin which are generated by using computing power.

The attacks made public over the weekend by British security researcher Scott Helme showed more than 4,000 website were infected in this manner, including those of the British data protection and privacy watchdog and the U.S. federal courts system.

Unlike traditional attacks, these infections do not contain "ransomware" or steal data, but operate in stealth mode to make profits from the shadowy world of cryptocurrencies.

Helme said in a blog post Sunday that the hackers were able to reach large numbers of websites by infecting a commonly used "plug-in," or software which helps a site run better.

In this case, the hackers used the malicious software to create Monero, one of several new cryptocurrencies which are making a splash in financial markets.

"If you want to load a crypto miner on 1,000+ websites you don't attack 1,000+ websites, you attack the 1 website that

they all load content from," he said.

The creator of the plug-in, the British software firm TextHelp, said it took the affected software offline after it discovered the "attempt to illegally generate cryptocurrency."

"This was a criminal act and a thorough investigation is currently underway," the company said in a statement.

Researchers have been warning in recent weeks about this kind of malware, which can deliver profits without being obvious to users.

Security researchers at Cisco Talos warned last month that this kind of hacking activity "has exponentially increased."

Because of the huge financial gains in cryptocurrencies, Cisco researchers said this has become a prime target for hackers.

"At a high level mining is simply using system resources to solve large mathematical calculations which result in some amount of cryptocurrency being awarded to the solvers," Cisco researchers wrote in a research note.

Security researcher Graham Cluley said the latest attack highlights vulnerabilities in websites which may have weaknesses in third party components.

"Things could have been much worse," Cluley said in a blog post. "Imagine if the plug-in had been tampered with to steal login passwords rather than steal CPU resources from visiting computers."

## Russia Searches for Body Fragments After Plane Crash



A helicopter carries away the bodies of the victims, as Russian Emergency Ministry rescuers work at the site of a plane crash which occurred the day before in Ramensky district, on the outskirts of Moscow on February 12, 2018.

MOSCOW (AP) -- Tramping through snowy fields outside Moscow, emergency workers found both flight data recorders from a crashed Russian airliner as they searched Monday for debris and the remains of the 71 passengers and crew who died.

The An-148 twin-engine regional jet bound for Orsk in the southern Urals went down minutes after taking off from Moscow's Domodedovo airport Sunday afternoon. All 65 passengers and 6 crew on board were killed.

Russian investigators quickly ruled out a terror attack but will not speculate on possible reasons for the crash.

The Investigative Committee, Russia's premier state investigative agency, said the plane was intact and there had been no fire on board before it hit the ground.

The plane's fuel tanks exploded on impact, scattering debris across 30 hectares (74 acres) in deep snow, according to the Emergency Ministry, which used drones to direct the search.

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich told a Cabinet meeting that emergency teams have found both flight data and cockpit conversation recorders, which are crucial for determining the crash's cause.

Officials said the search for victims' remains at the crash site will take a

week. The 65 passengers ranged in age from 5 to 79, according to a list posted by the Russian Emergencies Ministry. Most victims were from Orsk, where the authorities declared an official day of mourning on Monday.

The plane was operated by Saratov Airlines, which said the plane had received proper maintenance and passed all the necessary checks before the flight. The plane was built in 2010 for a different airline that operated it for several years before putting it in storage. Saratov Airlines commissioned it last year.

The airline said the plane's captain had more than 5,000 hours of flying time, 2,800 of them in an An-148. The other pilot had 812 hours of experience, largely in that model.

Despite Saratov Airlines' move to ground its An-148s, another Russian operator of the plane, Angara, based in Irkutsk in eastern Siberia, said it will keep flying them. Russian government agencies that also operate the aircraft haven't grounded them either.

The An-148 once was touted as an example of Russian-Ukrainian cooperation, but it fell into trouble as relations between the two neighbors unraveled following Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

## Philippines Bars Citizens From Working in Kuwait



Filipino workers who were repatriated from Kuwait listen during a dialogue with a welfare officer upon arrival at Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Paranaque, Metro Manila, on Feb 12, 2018.

MANILA (AFP) -- The Philippines on Monday expanded a ban on its citizens working in Kuwait after President Rodrigo Duterte angrily lashed out at the Persian Gulf state over reports of Filipino workers suffering abuse and exploitation.

Authorities say 252,000 Filipinos work in Kuwait, many as maids. They are among over two million employed in the region, whose remittances are a lifeline to the Philippine economy.

But Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello on Monday announced a "total ban" on new employment in the country, including Filipinos who had already obtained employment permits but had not yet left for the wealthy oil-producing country.

Authorities have not ruled out revoking the permits of Filipinos currently working in Kuwait or of previous hires returning on new contracts.

"With the advent of the series of reports involving abuses and deaths of overseas Filipino workers in Kuwait, a total ban on deployment of all overseas workers ... is hereby enforced," Bello said, reading an order.

"This order takes effect immediately." The move would affect thousands of workers, labor spokesman Abigail de Vega said.

The fresh move came after Duterte last month barred Filipinos from seeking work in Kuwait, although the ban exempted

those who had already secured permission.

Last Friday Duterte hit out at Kuwait as he brandished photos reportedly of a Filipina maid found in a freezer, saying she had been "roasted like a pig".

Duterte has been vocal on the issue of abuse of Filipinos in the Middle East, even threatening a ban on citizens working anywhere in the region.

He also alleged Arab employers routinely raped their Filipina workers, forced them to work 21 hours each day and fed them scraps.

"Is there something wrong with your culture? Is there something wrong with your values?" he had said, addressing Kuwait.

Kuwait's embassy in Manila declined to comment.

Accounts of Filipinos being subjected to abuse, overwork, rape or dying in suspicious circumstances in the region have long circulated.

The Philippine foreign affairs department said on Monday authorities were repatriating 10,000 overstay Filipinos from Kuwait, taking advantage of an amnesty program arranged with the Kuwaiti government.

Officials added they were eyeing China and Russia as "alternative markets" for overseas workers.

## News in Brief

KIEV (Reuters) -- Ukrainian opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili was detained in Kiev on Monday by unidentified people in camouflage, his spokeswoman said, adding that the intention might be to deport him from Ukraine. It was not immediately clear who was responsible for the detention, but last week Saakashvili's lawyer said he could face imminent deportation or extradition after he lost a court appeal. The former president of Georgia entered Ukraine last September despite being stripped of his Ukrainian citizenship in a protracted standoff with the Kiev authorities, whom he accuses of corruption. A video posted on Saakashvili's official Facebook page showed several men in green military uniform approaching a man lying on the floor of a restaurant. "Unknown people in masks seized Mikheil Saakashvili and took him away ... The kidnappers were in three white minivans," a Facebook post on the same page read. His spokeswoman said the border service was likely behind the move. "We regard this as a detention with the aim of then deporting Saakashvili from the country. They could illegally send him to Poland," she said by telephone. Ukrainian officials says Saakashvili illegally entered the country from Poland in September after he was stripped of his Ukrainian citizenship.

DHAKA (AFP) -- Thousands of Bangladeshi opposition supporters staged rallies across the country on Monday demanding the release of their jailed leader Khaleda Zia and free and fair elections. Zia, twice prime minister in the Muslim-majority nation of 160 million, was imprisoned for five years last week for embezzlement, sparking riots from supporters who rejected the verdict as politically motivated. The leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is expected to appeal but the conviction may affect her ability to stand in a general election slated for December. Thousands of BNP activists in cities across Bangladesh joined hands in a march calling for Zia's immediate release from a prison in Dhaka. Zia, 72, is expected to be freed on bail once the appeal has been lodged but her supporters fear Bangladesh's ruling party will try and keep her detained on other charges.

DHAKA (AFP) -- A Myanmar government minister has told Rohingya refugees living in a makeshift camp on the Bangladesh border they should take up a government offer to return, warning they will face "consequences" if they stay where they are. A video circulated on social media apparently shows Myanmar's Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Aung Soe addressing a group of refugees through a barbed wire fence last Friday. Nearly 700,000 Rohingyas have sought sanctuary in Bangladesh since a military crackdown on the Muslim minority in Myanmar last year forced them from their homes. Despite the campaign, which the United Nations has said amounts to ethnic cleansing, the two governments agreed late last year to repatriate all the newly-arrived refugees. But many say they do not want to return until Myanmar agrees to give them citizenship and guarantees their safety.

LONDON (AFP) -- London City Airport was closed Monday as military experts worked to remove a World War II bomb found in the neighboring dock. The unexploded ordnance was discovered in King George V Dock, during planned works near the runway of London's most central airport. The bomb was discovered at around 5:00am Sunday and a 214-meter exclusion zone was imposed "to ensure that the ordnance can be safely dealt with whilst limiting any risk to the public," police said. Homes within the exclusion zone were evacuated overnight and the local authority was providing residents with temporary accommodation and support. Police remained at the scene Monday. "The operation to remove the ordnance is ongoing in partnership with our colleagues in the Royal Navy," London's Metropolitan Police said in a statement.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- A German consumer rights group said Monday that a court had found Facebook's use of personal data to be illegal because the U.S. social media platform did not adequately secure the informed consent of its users. The verdict, from a Berlin regional court, comes as Big Tech faces increasing scrutiny in Germany over its handling of sensitive personal data that enables it to micro-target online advertising. The Federation of German Consumer Organizations (vzbv) said that Facebook's default settings and some of its terms of service were in breach of consumer law, and that the court had found parts of the consent to data usage to be invalid. "Facebook hides default settings that are not privacy-friendly in its privacy center and does not provide sufficient information about it when users register," Heiko Duenkel said, litigation policy officer at the vzbv.

BRUSSELS (Reuters) -- The United Nations should consider a force of some 20,000 soldiers from non-NATO countries and 4,000 police to help resolve the crisis in Ukraine, according to a new report to be presented to top officials this week. More than 10,000 people have been killed since April 2014 in a conflict that pits Ukrainian forces against Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. Intermittent clashes continue despite a notional ceasefire and diplomatic peace efforts. Russian President Vladimir Putin has suggested a limited UN peacekeeping mission to eastern Ukraine, which many in the West see as an opportunity to negotiate a broader UN force to restore order, diplomats say. A report commissioned by former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen - now an adviser to Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko - will be presented to officials including the U.S. special envoy to Ukraine, Kurt Volker, at the Munich Security Conference Saturday.