

# Suu Kyi Under Fire at ASEAN Summit Over 'Genocide'



Members of the Rohingya community gather in Hyde Park to protest against Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi's appearance at the ASEAN summit on March 17, 2018.

SYDNEY (Dispatches) -- Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi was pressed about the Rohingya crisis at an ASEAN summit in Sydney Sunday, but the regional bloc stressed it could not intervene and "force an outcome".

Suu Kyi has been under intense global criticism for her public silence amid a brutal military crackdown that has forced nearly 700,000 of the Muslim-minority Rohingya to flee Myanmar's Rakhine state for Bangladesh.

The humanitarian crisis was one of the key topics at a three-day special summit between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Australia.

"We discussed the situation in Rakhine state at considerable length today," Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said at the closing press conference.

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who is this year's ASEAN chair, said Myanmar's neighbors were concerned about the ongoing situation but could not "force an outcome".

"It is of concern for all ASEAN

countries, and yet ASEAN is not able to intervene and to force an outcome," Lee said alongside Turnbull.

Both leaders said they would back efforts to reach a long-term solution to end the crisis, and were supporting humanitarian efforts to help those displaced.

The 10-nation ASEAN prides itself on consensus diplomacy and non-interference in each other's affairs.

But the exodus has sparked rare tension within the association, and Muslim-majority Malaysia has called for an independent ASEAN-led investigation into allegations of army abuse.

Malaysia's leader Najib Razak increased the pressure on Suu Kyi Saturday, saying the Rohingya issue could threaten regional security as he warned those affected could fall prey to extremist groups like Daesh.

Lee said Singapore had no "specific intelligence" on whether there were terrorist groups in Rakhine state, but said "these are possibilities that you cannot rule out and which you have to keep on being on the watch out for".

ASEAN groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Australia has been a dialogue partner since 1974.

## Duterte Calls on World Nations to Leave ICC



In this Feb. 13, 2018 file photo, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte addresses Filipino Overseas Workers.

MANILA (Dispatches) -- Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte Sunday called for other signatories of the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court to join his country in withdrawing from the treaty.

Duterte's comments during a speech to graduating cadets at the Philippine Military Academy in northern Philippines comes after ICC prosecutors last month opened a preliminary

examination into the president's "war on drugs".

The Southeast Asian nation last week notified the United Nations secretary-general of its decision to withdraw from the ICC because of what the outspoken Philippine leader called "outrageous" attacks by UN officials and violations of due process.

"I will convince everybody now under the treaty to get out, get out,"

Duterte said. "It is not a document that was prepared by anybody, it's EU-sponsored."

About 4,000 Filipinos have been killed by police in the past 19 months in a crackdown on drug trafficking.

Police say those thousands of deaths were during legitimate anti-drugs operations in which the suspects had violently resisted arrest.

The Philippines on Thursday told the UN it was withdrawing from the ICC. Duterte on Sunday insisted the ICC could not prosecute him since the treaty was not published locally, in violation of domestic laws.

"That treaty, if you read it, it's all bull," Duterte said. He added that the ICC was part of efforts of "white idiots in the EU" to "atone" for wrongdoings in Africa and the Middle East.

"These people when they went to Africa, they killed the Arabs... it is really an atonement for their sins. And then they run after either the blacks, when there are so many problems but they still meddle," he said.

Should the Philippines fully withdraw from the court it would follow the African nation of Burundi, which in October 2017 became the first country to leave.

## Communal Violence Displaces Thousands in Congo

BUNIA, Congo (AP) -- The assailants attacked under cover of darkness, slaughtering Nguli Nzafi's wife and three children with machetes and arrows.

The 71-year-old, who also lost all 40 of his cattle in the violence, was forced to flee on foot some 90 kilometers to safety in the town of Bunia.

"I have lost everything because I no longer have my wife nor my children," he says. "I cannot eat nor sleep. I'm afraid that this fighting is as bad as the war in 1996-2002."

Violence between Nzafi's Hema community and the Lendu ethnic group in Congo's northeast has now killed at least 150 people and has forced more than 32,000 people to flee to Bunia, where humanitarian assistance is strained and the suffering are eager for improved conditions.

Another 28,000 have also fled into Uganda, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

There is a long history of tensions between the Lendu and Hema groups, whose ongoing battles since 1999 already have killed thousands and led the UN to deploy a peacekeeping force in the area. Much of it is rooted in economic tensions over land as the Lendu historically have been farmers on stationery plots of land while the Hema have raised animals and moved

throughout the year to good grazing areas.

Once those disputes erupted into violence, the cycle of tit-for-tat attacks caused a mounting death toll.

The instability here in Ituri province presents yet another challenge for the Congolese military and UN peacekeeping force who are already grappling with the threats posed by rebel groups, and with ongoing unrest in the Kasai provinces.

The latest round of fighting began in December, Djugu deputy administrator Willy Maese told The Associated Press.

"The Lendu had asked the Hema to give them part of their crops. Following their refusals, the Lendu launched attacks directly on the Hemas," he said.

Despite a reprieve when authorities came, fighting intensified in February leading to a wave of displacements, he said.

Kpadyu Londri, a 26-year-old from Djugu, said the Lendu came to steal cows and ravage fields. They killed his five brothers and a woman, he said.

He has found safety in Bunia, 75 kilometers from his home village, but he said conditions are bad.

"There are no tents so the rain falls on us, no beds, blankets ... we have already lost seven displaced (people), who have died as a result of starvation and dirty hands disease," he said, referring to outbreaks of cholera.

## British Committee Hints at Delay in Brexit



Pro-Brexit demonstrators protest outside the Houses of Parliament on 23 November, 2016.

LONDON (AFP) -- Britain's official departure from the European Union may have to be delayed with many key negotiating issues still to be resolved, Westminster's Brexit committee suggested Sunday.

In a new report on the progress of negotiations, the Exiting the European Union Committee said there had been "little progress made" on key issues, including how to maintain an open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Britain is set to leave the EU on March 29, 2019, almost three years after the referendum vote for Brexit, having triggered the two-year Article 50 withdrawal process in 2017, and negotiations on the future partnership are meant to be wrapped up by October.

"If substantial aspects of the future partnership remain to be agreed in October 2018, the government should seek a limited extension to the Article 50 time," added the committee, whose members predominately supported staying in the EU during the 2016 referendum.

Chair of the Committee Hilary Benn said that negotiations were now at "a critical stage... with just seven months left to reach agreement on a whole host of highly complex issues."

"The government must now come

forward with credible, detailed proposals as to how it can operate a 'frictionless border' between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland," added the opposition Labor MP.

"We know of no international border, other than the internal borders of the EU, that operates without checks and physical infrastructure. This is deeply concerning."

Committee member and Brexit supporter Jacob Rees-Mogg dismissed the report, writing on Twitter that it "merely seeks to stop Brexit".

"Select committees reports are only influential if they are unanimous, dividing on 'leave remain' lines simply re-fights the referendum," he added.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, another Brexit campaigner, said "I don't think that's true at all" when asked about the report on BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Other issues to be resolved in negotiations include the status of EU citizens arriving in Britain during a transition period - when Britain will continue to follow EU law in return for access to the bloc's single market for a period of up to two years after officially leaving.

The committee warned that affording such citizens different rights from those arriving before Britain officially leaves may be "inconsistent" with EU law.

## North Korean Missile Can Reach Europe: Agency



Footage of North Korea's ICBM launch

BERLIN (Dispatches) -- North Korean rockets can now be fitted with nuclear weapons and could reach Germany and central Europe, a top official with Germany's foreign intelligence agency told lawmakers this week, according to a report in the Bild am Sonntag newspaper.

BND Deputy Director Ole Diehl told lawmakers during a closed-door meeting that the assessment was "certain," the newspaper reported, citing participants in the briefing.

At the same time, Diehl said the agency viewed talks between North and South Korea as a positive sign. No comment was immediately available from the BND.

A senior North Korean diplomat left for Finland on Sunday for talks with former U.S. and South Korean officials, Yonhap News Agency reported, amid a series of diplomatic encounters ahead of a possible U.S.-North Korean summit.

North Korea has made no secret of its plans to develop a missile capable of hitting the U.S. mainland.

It defends the programs as a necessary deterrent against perceived plans for invasion by the United States, which stations 28,500 troops in South Korea, a legacy of the Korean war.

Tensions have eased in recent weeks, coinciding with North Korea's participation in the Winter Olympics held in the South last month.

Representatives of North Korea, South Korea and the United States are set to meet in Finland for talks on denuclearization, according to South Korean and Finnish officials.

The North Korea talks in Finland will include American representatives who are not government officials, said Kimmo Lahdevirta, an official at the Finland foreign ministry. The U.S. does not have a diplomatic presence in North Korea.

South Korea's Foreign Ministry told CNN that former officials and private experts from South Korea would be at the "second-tier" talks on denuclearization. The ministry suggested the U.S. would also be represented in some way, without giving details.

Lahdevirta described the meeting as a "track 1.5 academic meeting ... involving representatives from North Korea, South Korea and the U.S."

So-called "track 1.5 talks" bring together a mixture of current government officials and nongovernmental experts.

Lahdevirta said no current U.S. government officials will be participating. He could not say who was coming from North or South Korea.



LONDON (Reuters) -- British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Sunday that Russia has been stockpiling the deadly nerve agent used to poison a Russian former double agent in England and has been investigating how such weapons can be used in assassinations. Britain has said Russia used the Soviet-era nerve agent called Novichok to attack Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the first known offensive use of such a weapon on European soil since World War Two. Russia has denied any involvement. "We actually have evidence within the last 10 years that Russia has not only been investigating the delivery of nerve agents for the purposes of assassination, but has also been creating and stockpiling Novichok," Johnson told the BBC.

BERLIN (Reuters) -- German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier Sunday warned the United States against trying to drive a wedge between Germany and the rest of Europe with import tariffs, and said a global trade war would harm both producers and consumers. Altmaier, who will travel to Washington later on Sunday, told the Handelsblatt newspaper that he prepared for his meetings with U.S. officials in close coordination with EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom. "We are a customs union and act jointly. It cannot be in the interest of the U.S. government to divide Europe, and it also would not succeed," he told the paper.

HARARE (Reuters) -- Zimbabwe's first presidential and parliamentary elections since the end of former strongman Robert Mugabe's long rule will take place in July, President Emmerson Mnangagwa said on Saturday. The polls will be the first major test of the new leader, who took power in November after a de facto military coup forced the 94-year-old Mugabe to resign. They will also be the first without Mugabe's name on the ballot since independence from Britain in 1980. Mnangagwa, 75, said the elections would be free of the violence that gripped previous polls and which was one of the reasons for strained relations between Zimbabwe and the West. "I have already invited all political parties in Zimbabwe to a roundtable where we all commit ourselves to non-violence," he added. Mnangagwa will have to announce a date in an official notice.

LONDON (AP) -- British police say a man who had been kicked out of a nightclub rammed his car into revelers on a dance floor, injuring at least 13 people. The Kent Police force says the 21-year-old has been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder over Saturday's crash in Gravesend, 48 kilometers southeast of London. Police say they are not treating the incident as terrorism. Footage posted on social media showed a large car on a dance floor inside a marquee tent at Blake's nightclub. On Facebook, the club thanked "the heroic actions of our door team and guests to apprehend the individual before further harm was caused." Police said Sunday that at least 13 people suffered injuries including broken bones but none of the injuries is life-threatening.

DHAKA (Dispatches) -- Seven militants were sentenced to death Sunday in Bangladesh for the murder of a Sufi shrine caretaker in 2015, at the height of a wave of attacks which swept the South Asian country. The defendants were convicted by a special court in the northern city of Rangpur where the killing took place, according to prosecutor Ratish Chandra Bhowmik. "All seven are members of JMB (Jamayatul Mujahideen Bangladesh)," Bhowmik told AFP, referring to a homegrown Islamist group. "Six of the convicts were in absentia," he said, adding the defendant remained at large. Two further suspects had been killed in a shootout with security forces since the murder, Bhowmik added. He said the men confessed to slaughtering the caretaker in November 2015 because they considered him a heretic.

ABUJA (AFP) -- Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will not attend the African Union summit in Rwanda this week, an official statement said Sunday, in a blow to plans to launch a major free trade treaty across 54 countries. The meeting in Kigali is intended to formally launch the African Continental Free Trade Area Treaty, which Nigeria's cabinet endorsed last Wednesday. Buhari was scheduled to leave Abuja on Monday ahead of Wednesday's launch but pulled out to allow for more consultations. "Mr President will no longer be travelling to Kigali for the event because certain key stakeholders in Nigeria indicated that they had not been consulted, for which reasons they had some concerns on the provisions of the treaty," the statement said. "Consequently, Mr President's decision is to allow time for broader consultations on the issue."