

# Deadly Blast Hits Huge Rally for PM in Ethiopia



Ethiopians react after an explosion during a rally in support of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia June 23, 2018.

ADDIS ABABA (AP) -- An explosion struck a huge rally for Ethiopia's reformist new prime minister on Saturday shortly after he spoke and was waving to the cheering crowd that turned out to support sweeping changes in Africa's second most populous nation.

Addressing the country minutes after he was rushed to safety, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed called the blast a "well-orchestrated attack" but one that failed. He did not lay blame but said police were investigating. Health Minister Amir Aman confirmed one death while Abiy's chief of staff said 83 people were hurt, six critically.

"The prime minister was the

target," a rally organizer, Seyoum Teshome, told The Associated Press. "An individual tried to hurl the grenade toward a stage where the prime minister was sitting but was held back by the crowd."

The man with the grenade was wearing a police uniform, witness Abraham Tilahun told the AP. Police officers nearby quickly restrained him, he said. "Then we heard the explosion."

AP video from the scene showed bloodstained ground and abandoned shoes while people chanting the prime minister's name fled, some clutching their heads in shock and despair.

The explosion in packed Meskel Square in the capital, Addis Ababa,

came after weeks of reforms that had shocked many in the East African nation after years of anti-government tensions, states of emergency, thousands of arrests and long internet shutdowns.

The 42-year-old Abiy took office in April and quickly announced the release of tens of thousands of prisoners, the opening of state-owned companies to private investment and the unconditional embrace of a peace deal with rival Eritrea. Websites were unblocked and opposition figures were invited to dinner. Ethiopians said they could hardly keep up with the pace of change.

The United States has been among those in the international community expressing support for the dramatic changes in Ethiopia, a key security ally in a turbulent region with neighbors including Somalia and South Sudan.

Not everyone has cheered the reforms. Some Ethiopians in the north near the border with Eritrea, one of the world's most reclusive nations, have protested the embrace of the peace deal. And the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, a party in Ethiopia's ruling coalition that has been the dominant force in government for most of the past 27 years, said the announcement on the peace deal had been made before the ruling coalition's congress met to discuss it.

## Russia Rejects Call to Withdraw Troops From Moldova



People carry a Russian flag (C) and a flag with a portrait of Russia's President Vladimir Putin reading "We are for Putin!" in Tiraspol, the main city of Transnistrian separatist republic of Moldova, on May 9, 2014, during Victory Day celebrations.

MOSCOW (AFP) -- Russia on Saturday rejected an international call backed by the United Nations for it to withdraw troops from the Transnistria breakaway region of Moldova.

The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement that its troops stationed in ex-Moldova's Transnistria region despite Chisinau's calls for them to withdraw "remain a guarantor of peace and stability."

It reacted after the UN General Assembly on Friday backed a call from Britain, Canada, Poland and eight other countries for Russia to complete "unconditionally and without further delay the withdrawal" of its troops from Moldova.

Moldova's Russian-speaking Transnistria region broke away after a brief civil war as the Soviet Union collapsed. Russian troops, there as peacekeepers, enforced a ceasefire.

Transnistria's independence is not recognized by any state, including Russia, which still stations troops there.

The region is considered one of the many "frozen conflicts" in the former Soviet Union.

Peace efforts have stumbled over demands for a Russian military withdrawal.

The non-binding UN resolution -- the first to demand a Russian withdrawal from Moldova -- was adopted by a vote of 64 to 15 with 83 abstentions at the 193-nation assembly. Russia was among those who voted against, while those who backed it included Moldova and Romania.

The resolution placed demands for Russian troop withdrawal from Moldova on the agenda of the assembly, which will hold a debate on the situation in the coming months.

"Passing the resolution can undermine the fragile process that has tentatively started in recent months" towards a resolution of the conflict in Transnistria," Moscow said.

It said the resolution was a publicity move by Moldova politicians who are "aiming to score points through fomenting anti-Russian moods ahead of upcoming parliamentary elections," due to be held later this year.

## U.S. Pilots Say Targeted by Blinding Laser Attacks

TOKYO (Japan Times) -- U.S. military pilots flying aircraft over the East China Sea have been targeted by blinding laser attacks more than 20 times over the last 10 months, U.S. officials told The Japan Times, after a number of similar attacks in East Africa that the Pentagon has said Chinese military personnel were behind.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said the attacks in the waterway, where the Chinese military has bolstered its operations, were first reported last September. The incidents were believed to have come from a range of sources, "both ashore and from fishing vessels," spokeswoman Maj. Cassandra Gesecki said.

Indo-Pacific Command said it would not go into specifics about the incidents, but media reports quoting unidentified U.S. officials said some of the fishing boats were Chinese-flagged vessels. Officials wouldn't

definitively confirm that Chinese personnel were behind all of the incidents.

Beijing operates a "maritime militia" of Chinese fishing boats, which it trains and subsidizes with sophisticated gear such as GPS equipment. Such vessels have played an important role in China asserting its various territorial claims in the East and South China Seas.

Chinese personnel at the country's first overseas military base in Djibouti had been using lasers to interfere with U.S. military aircraft at a nearby American base, activity that has resulted in injuries to U.S. pilots and prompted the U.S. to launch a formal diplomatic protest with Beijing.

However, unlike the Djibouti incidents, where military-grade lasers had been employed in some cases, the East China Sea incidents involved smaller, commercial-grade laser pointers popularly known as

"cat grade" lasers because pet owners have known to use to play with their animals. Even so, these types of lasers have been known to temporarily blind pilots and, in some cases, cause eye damage.

"In light of these recent incidents, units operating in the area are conducting an assessment of their laser eye protection equipment," Gesecki said.

While Chinese fishing vessels have long operated in the East China Sea, the country's military has embarked on a military modernization program heavily promoted by President Xi Jinping, who has overseen a shift in focus toward creating a more potent fighting force. This has included projects such as building a second aircraft carrier, integrating stealth fighters into the air force and fielding an array of advanced missiles that can strike air and sea targets from long distances.

## Rohingya Atrocities Revealed: Tied to Trees, Raped for Days, Burnt Alive



In this photograph taken on October 21, 2016, armed Myanmar soldiers patrol a village in Maungdaw located in Rakhine State.

LONDON (Guardian) -- Harrowing accounts of Rohingya women tied to trees and raped for days by Myanmar's military and men being pushed into mass graves, doused with petrol and set alight have been sent to the international criminal court.

The evidence has been sent by a coalition of Bangladeshi organizations to ICC prosecutors who are pushing to investigate allegations of forced deportation from a country where it has no jurisdiction.

ICC judges met behind closed doors at the Hague this week to begin their discussions and documents seen exclusively by the Guardian will form part of the case for an investigation.

The legal argument for an ICC investigation is being led by prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, and it is the first time such a case has been considered by the court. While Bangladesh is a member state, which gives the ICC power to investigate crimes committed there, Myanmar is not, and denies any ethnic cleansing was carried out against the Rohingya.

Bensouda argues the cross-border nature of the forced deportation of the Rohingya into Bangladesh means it could legally fall within the ICC's remit.

Myanmar has until 27 July to respond to the allegations and demonstrate that the ICC

does not have jurisdiction over the Rohingya case.

The request is unlikely to be welcomed by the Myanmar government. On Wednesday, a social media account run by the office of Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi quoted her berating "hate narratives from outside the country" which have fuelled tensions between Muslim Rohingya and Buddhist Rakhine communities.

A document submitted to the ICC by the Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) and its partner Odhikar, seen by the Guardian, included the story of Marwa, 10, whose family was shot dead before she, along with a group of other young girls from her village, were taken to nearby school where they were repeatedly gang raped.

Also in the submission was the account of Khurshida, 20, who described how she was held captive with several other Rohingya women, before being stripped, tied to trees and raped for days. Khurshida eventually lost consciousness and was dumped outside the camp by soldiers who assumed she was dead.

They also document the case of Sakila, 25, who hid as her family were locked inside a house that was set alight by soldiers, and Nur Jahan, 31, who was raped violently and repeatedly in front of her seven-year-old daughter.

## Greek PM Announces End to 'Thorny Road of Bailouts'



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras holds his tie as he speaks at the parliamentary group of Syriza and Independent Greeks in Athens, June 22, 2018.

ATHENS (AFP) -- Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said his country was "turning a page" after eurozone ministers declared its crisis over as they granted Athens debt relief under a bailout exit strategy.

The eurozone ministers' agreement comes nearly a decade after Athens finances spun out of control, sparking three bailouts and threatening the country's euro membership.

"Yesterday we reached a historic agreement on Greece's debt with the Eurogroup," Tsipras told the country's president, Prokopis Pavlopoulos.

"We are turning a page," he said, adding that Greece had to remain on the path of reform. Tsipras, who hates ties and hasn't worn one since becoming prime minister in 2015, had pledged at the time he would wear one "only when (Greece's) debt is cut."

He honored his pledge late Friday, arriving at a celebratory meeting of his coalition lawmakers sporting a maroon-colored tie with a white shirt and blue jacket.

He removed it however at the end of a speech to the gathering, observing that "the Greek people had won a battle but not the war" and promising to continue to lead the fight to victory.

Following the eurozone ministers' hard-fought agreement declared earlier Friday, Greece is slated to leave its third financial rescue since 2010 on Aug. 20.

"The Greek crisis ends here tonight," said EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, after the marathon talks in Luxembourg.

The deal was expected to be an easy one, but last-minute resistance by Germany - Greece's long bailout nemesis and biggest creditor - dragged the talks on for six hours.

The ministers agreed to extend maturities by 10 years on major parts of its total debt obligations, a mountain that has reached close to double the country's annual economic output.

They also agreed to disburse 15 billion euros (\$17.5 billion) to ease Greece's exit from the rescue programme.

This would leave Greece with a hefty 24 billion euro safety cushion, officials said.

"The Greek government is happy with the agreement," Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos said after the talks.

Tsakalotos' predecessor in the government, maverick economist Yanis Varoufakis, was more scathing in his assessment.

"Congratulations, comrades. (Eurozone creditors) extend the Greek state's bankruptcy into 2060 and they call it debt ... relief," he tweeted.

The eight-year crisis toppled four governments and shrank the economy by 25%. Unemployment soared and still hovers over 20%, sending thousands of young educated Greeks abroad.



HARARE (Reuters) -- An explosion rocked a stadium in Zimbabwe where President Emmerson Mnangagwa was addressing a political rally on Saturday, his spokesman said, adding the head of state was unhurt and taken to safety. "There has been an incident at Bulawayo (White City Stadium) where the president was addressing a rally. This is now a police issue but the president is safe at Bulawayo State House," spokesman George Charamba told Reuters. "We are still to get information on what exactly happened as we understand that some people could have been injured as this happened in the VIP tent." Police were not immediately available for comment. Footage from Zimbabwe state television showed the explosion took place near Mnangagwa as he waved to supporters. Mnangagwa was speaking at his first rally in the second city of Bulawayo, an opposition stronghold where the ruling ZANU-PF has not won in national elections since 2000.

PARIS (Reuters) -- French President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday he favored the implementation of financial sanctions for European Union countries that refuse migrants that have proven asylum status. Macron was speaking on the eve of a hastily-convened summit on immigration in Brussels on Sunday between EU leaders on the migration dispute that is dividing Europe. "I am for myself in favor of mechanisms that indeed take this into account," Macron said when asked about his views on possible financial sanctions. "You can't have countries that massively benefit from the solidarity of the European Union and that massively voice their national selfishness when it comes to migrant issues," he added.

TOKYO (AFP) -- Japan is suspending evacuation drills simulating a North Korean missile attack after historic talks between Washington and Pyongyang, its top government spokesman said. The decision comes after U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un met last week in Singapore and signed a joint document calling for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. "Following achievements made in the U.S.-North Korea summit, we will halt drills involving residents for the time being," Yoshihide Suga told reporters, confirming earlier reports. Instead, the government will shift its focus to keeping people informed about the nation's alert system and "how to behave" if missiles strike Japanese territory, said Suga. Last year, Pyongyang fired two missiles over Japan and it has splashed others into the sea near the country, sparking a mix of panic and outrage.

ALMATY (Reuters) -- Police in Kazakhstan detained dozens of people at an anti-government rally on Saturday organized by an exiled opponent of the veteran president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. Mukhtar Ablyazov, a former tycoon and government minister, started staging rallies in the ex-Soviet republic earlier this year after claiming to have recruited thousands of supporters through social networks and messenger apps. A few dozen people had gathered on Saturday for the rally in downtown Almaty, the Central Asian nation's biggest city. Police quickly moved to detain almost everyone at the location, including those who said they were only passers-by. Ablyazov's Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) movement said through social media that some protesters were also detained at a similar rally in Astana, the Kazakh capital.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- The death toll in Nicaragua during two months of anti-government unrest has risen to 212, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights said, faulting President Daniel Ortega's government for "serious" human rights violations. "Nicaragua has not fulfilled its international obligations to respect, protect and guarantee human rights in the context of the social protests that began on April 18," the rights body said in its report after its visit to the Central American country. "On the contrary, the IACHR found that the state response has been characterized by the repression and criminalization of the demonstrators and the social movement they represent, which has resulted in serious violations of human rights," the 97-page document said. The Washington-based group said more than 1,300 people had been wounded in the unrest.

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) -- A Vatican court on Saturday sentenced a Catholic priest to five years in jail for possessing child pornography while he was based in the United States as a diplomat. Carlo Alberto Capella will serve time in the small jail inside the Vatican police force headquarters, the Vatican said. The trial lasted two days and Capella admitted at the first hearing on Friday that he had developed a "morbid" desire after he arrived in the United States to take up the diplomatic post in the Vatican's embassy in Washington in 2016. "It was never part of my priestly life before," he told the court, adding that he was unhappy in Washington. The U.S. State Department notified the Vatican in August 2017 of a possible violation of laws relating to child pornography images by a member of the diplomatic corps of the Holy See accredited to Washington.