

# Salvini Orders Removal of Refugees From 'Model' Town



Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini talks at a news conference during his official visit in Tunis, Tunisia, September 27, 2018.

ROME (Reuters) -- Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini on Sunday defended his decision to move hundreds of migrants out of a southern Italian town widely seen as a model of successful integration as opposition groups accused him of racism.

Riace, a small town in Calabria, Italy's southern toe, has been in the spotlight since its mayor, Domenico Lucano, was arrested this month for allegedly favoring illegal immigration, sparking protests by residents and pro-migrant groups.

Salvini, leader of the right-wing League, celebrated the arrest, and this weekend announced that Riace's mainly African migrants would be moved out and spread around the country.

He said the decision was necessary to end abuses in the use of funds that previous governments had made available to the town for its projects to house and integrate migrants.

"We cannot tolerate irregularities in the use of public money, even under the excuse of spending it for migrants," said Salvini, whose party's support has surged on the back of his tough line against illegal immigration.

The decision was met with a barrage of criticism on Sunday from the leftist opposition and pro-migrant activists.

"We have to say with force that the action undertaken by Salvini against the Riace model is a vile act," said Nicola Zingaretti, president of the

central Lazio region, who is bidding for leadership of the center-left Democratic Party (PD).

Riace's integration efforts have won prizes and drawn international acclaim for opening the town's doors to thousands of refugees, integrating them into society and revitalizing a dwindling local population.

Over 300 citizens of Riace's 2,000 inhabitants are immigrants, according to deputy mayor Giuseppe Gervasi. Over the years the town has welcomed hundreds more but many have moved on to other European countries, he said.

Lucano, who has been mayor since 2002, was listed by Fortune magazine as one of the world's top 50 leaders in 2016.

Salvini said there would be no turning back and accused the PD of hypocrisy, saying the investigation into the misuse of funds in Riace had been launched by Marco Minniti, interior minister under the previous, PD-led government in 2017.

The head of Italy's network of migrant reception centers said there was no question of migrants housed in Riace being deported, and they would be found alternative places to stay elsewhere in Italy.

The anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, which governs with the League, has given Salvini a free hand in pursuing his immigration clampdown, which has focused mainly on preventing migrant boats from Libya arriving on Italy's shores.

# State of Emergency After Storm Hits Portugal, Spain



Firefighters remove damaged trees from the road in Figueira da Foz on Oct. 14, 2018.

LISBON (Dispatches) -- At least 300,000 homes were without power on Sunday after tropical storm Leslie hit Portugal's Atlantic coast, bringing with it heavy rain, strong winds and surging seas.

Leslie was downgraded from a hurricane before it reached Portugal late on Saturday. Authorities had urged people to stay indoors and keep away from coastal areas.

At least 1,000 trees were uprooted, mainly in coastal towns north of Lisbon where the storm first reached land, hitting power lines and blocking roads.

The A1, the main motorway running through Portugal, was temporarily blocked by a fallen tree, authorities said.

More than 300,000 homes lost electricity as the storm passed, said Belo Costa, commander at the Civil Protection Agency.

The storm, carrying winds of up to 100 km/h, was most intense

during the night. By Sunday morning the powerful winds and heavy rains had mostly subsided.

In Spain, winds of up to 100 km/h uprooted trees in the center of the country early on Sunday morning. Emergency services issued flood warnings for the north and northwest of the country for Sunday afternoon and evening, advising Spaniards to avoid driving in the storm.

Earlier this week, 12 people were killed in flash floods on the Mediterranean island of Mallorca.

Strong winds from Hurricane Ophelia in Portugal and western Spain fed forest fires that killed around 40 people during the heatwave in 2017.

Spain is still recovering from the heavy rains that provoked flash floods in the Mediterranean island of Majorca that killed 12 people Tuesday.

# Abe Renews Pledge to Cast Off Pacifist Constitution



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reviews members of Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) marching at Asaka Base in Asaka, north of Tokyo, Oct. 14, 2018.

TOKYO (AP) -- Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe renewed his pledge Sunday to push for a revision to the country's war-renouncing constitution, in which he wants the military explicitly mentioned.

Speaking before a field of about 4,000 troops, Abe said that a revision is needed to give his troops sense of pride.

"You have gained public trust with your own hands," Abe, wearing a tuxedo, told the troops in his address. "Now it's time to fulfill our responsibility as politicians to accommodate an environment where all Self-Defense Force can

accomplish their duties with sense of pride."

About 260 tanks and other military vehicles and 40 warplanes were exhibited at the event.

Re-elected as head of his ruling party last month and with up to three more years as Japan's leader, Abe is determined to pursue his long-sought charter amendment.

Many Japanese conservatives see Japan's U.S.-drafted constitution as a humiliation imposed after their World War II defeat.

When the Self-Defense Force was established in 1954, public opinion was initially divided over its role, but today the force

has gained support for its largely noncombat contribution in international peace keeping efforts and disaster relief.

Abe wants to add a clause to Article 9 of the constitution, which bans the use of force in settling international disputes. He wants to explicitly permit the existence of Japan's military.

Opponents say such a revision is not necessary because the defense force is widely recognized in and outside the country as Japan's military and its constitutionality is no longer an issue.

Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic Party has continuously expanded the force's international role by loosening interpretations of Article 9. In 2015, his government passed a defense law allowing Japanese troops to defend U.S. and other allies in case of foreign attack, a fundamental change from its self-defense only policy.

Two-thirds approval is needed in both houses to propose a revision, which would then be subject to a national referendum. Media surveys have shown most voters care more about their pay, education costs and the economy than a constitution revision.

# Anti-Racism Rally in Berlin Draws Huge Crowd



Demonstrators gather in Berlin's Tiergarten district on Oct. 13, 2018.

BERLIN (Guardian) -- Protesters from across Germany have marched through Berlin against racism, xenophobia and the far right in one of the country's biggest rallies of recent years.

Organizers put the turnout at 242,000 people. The demonstration followed anti-immigration protests in several eastern cities over the summer and a rise in support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party before a state election in Bavaria on Sunday.

A police spokesman declined to estimate the size of the crowd at the march, which was organized by a broad alliance of associations, labor unions, parties and rights groups including Amnesty International.

Marchers carried placards reading "build bridges not walls", "united against racism" and "we are indivisible - for an open and free society". Some danced to pop music on a warm autumn day.

The arrival of more than 1 million refugees, many from

war zones in the Middle East, has increased support for the AfD. It is expected to fare well in the election in Bavaria, long a stronghold of the conservative Christian Social Union, a member of Angela Merkel's federal coalition government.

Far-right groups in the eastern city of Chemnitz clashed with police and chased people they believed to be foreign in August after the fatal stabbing of a German man that was blamed on two immigrants. Similar protests took place in Dresden, Köthen and other eastern cities.

Merkel has accused AfD politicians of using the violent protests to stir up social tensions, although the number of violent attacks on refugees and asylum shelters in Germany fell sharply in the first half of this year.

Two companies have also warned their employees about the dangers of populism before the election in Bavaria, and the head of the BDI industry association has said the economy could be hurt by a wave of nationalism.



BERLIN, Germany (AFP) -- German Chancellor Angela Merkel's arch-conservative Bavarian allies were bracing for heavy electoral losses in the southern Alpine state Sunday that could trigger shock waves in Berlin. The Christian Social Union (CSU), who have almost singlehandedly ruled the wealthy beer-and-leatherhosen state since the 1960s, were expected to lose their absolute majority, polls showed. The other partner in Merkel's fragile "grand coalition," the Social Democrats, were also set to do poorly while the far-right and anti-immigration AfD looked certain to enter the state assembly. The biggest winners, however, may be the left-leaning Greens who have doubled their poll ratings to around 18 percent since the last state elections, which would make them the second strongest party. If the surveys prove correct, the Bavarian election will mark another step in the demise of "big-tent" mainstream parties and the fragmentation of the political landscape, as seen in other Western democracies. For Merkel, now often labeled a lame duck leader in her fourth and final term, it would further raise political pressure two weeks ahead of another dangerous regional vote, in the central state of Hesse.

LONDON (AP) -- Britain's former Brexit secretary urged members of Prime Minister Theresa May's cabinet to rebel against her proposed deal with the European Union over the terms of Britain's departure from the bloc Sunday. David Davis wrote in the Sunday Times that May's plans for some continued ties with the EU under her Chequers plan is "completely unacceptable" and must be stopped. The fellow Conservative Party member said the time has come for ministers to shoot down May's plan. "It is time for the cabinet to exert their collective authority," he said. "This week the authority of our constitution is on the line." May is struggling to build a consensus behind her Brexit plans ahead of a cabinet meeting Tuesday that will be followed by an EU summit Wednesday in Brussels. If Davis' call for a rebellion is effective, the cabinet meeting Tuesday would be a likely place for opposition to surface. Davis and former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson resigned from the cabinet this summer to protest May's Brexit blueprint. Both have become vocal opponents of her plan, calling it a betrayal of the Brexit vote that would leave Britain in a weakened position.

KATHMANDU (AFP) -- The bodies of nine climbers killed on Nepal's Mount Gurja were retrieved from the mountainside Sunday as rescuers tried to piece together what led to the freak accident. Rescuers found the bodies of the South Korean climbing expedition scattered across the base camp amid the broken remains of their tents and equipment. The team had injuries, including head wounds and broken bones, consistent with being hit by powerful winds, but rescuers say it most likely caused by the powerful downdraft from an avalanche not a storm. The remote camp at around 3,500 meters was located next to a gully that acted as a funnel for the mass of snow, ice and rocks brought down by the avalanche creating a powerful kickback of wind that decimated the team. It took a helicopter several trips to bring the bodies -- five South Koreans and four Nepalis -- down from the camp in the Dhaulagiri mountain range of Nepal's Annapurna region.

MOSCOW (TASS) -- Moscow strongly rejects any attempt to accuse it of involvement in an alleged state coup in Montenegro in 2016 as "groundless" and "absurd", the Russian Foreign Ministry said, commenting on recent statements by Montenegro Chief Special Prosecutor Milivoje Katnic. "Apparently, Montenegro Chief Special Prosecutor Katnic has decided to join the competition for the most absurd accusation ever put forward against Russia. For two years, this Montenegro justice official has been actively searching for 'irrefutable evidence' of the so-called attempted state coup in Podgorica in October 2016, in which agents of (Russia's military intelligence) GRU have allegedly taken part," the ministry said in a statement. "As we have repeatedly said, the Russian side strongly rejects any possibility of official involvement in those imaginary attempts to stage an illegal act, and believes that such accusations are groundless and absurd," it said.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was released from jail Sunday after three weeks behind bars for organizing anti-Kremlin protests, his second spell in detention in as many months. The 42-year-old activist left a detention center in the south of Moscow in the early hours of the morning and went to a waiting car, an AFP journalist at the scene said. The Kremlin critic finished a 30-day sentence in September for organizing a rally at the start of the year, but was arrested as soon as he was released to face further charges over another protest. The latter demonstration, against the raising of the retirement age, was held in time to coincide with regional elections last month. The Kremlin suffered rare defeats in those polls, with voters rejecting candidates from the ruling United Russia party in at least two regions.

# China: 'Sinicization' of Religion in Xinjiang Must Go On

SHANGHAI (Dispatches) -- The "sinicization" of religion must be upheld to promote ethnic solidarity and religious harmony, a senior Chinese official has said in the troubled western region of Xinjiang, which is home to a large Muslim population.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency quoted You Qian, head of the ruling Communist Party's United Front Work Department, which oversees ethnic and religious affairs, as making the remarks on a visit to Xinjiang this week.

"The Party's leadership over religious work must be upheld," You said, adding that "the infiltration of religious extremism must be

guarded against". Reports of mass detentions and strict surveillance of ethnic Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang have provoked international criticism.

China says Xinjiang faces a threat from takfiri militants and separatists and has rejected all accusations of mistreatment in an area where hundreds have been killed in recent years in unrest between Uighurs and members of the ethnic Han Chinese majority.

Xinhua said You expressed the hope "that people in religious circles can inherit and carry forward the fine traditions to love the motherland and their faith, lead religious believers to follow the right faith and abide by

the law and contribute to the healthy development of Islam".

You is a member of the influential secretariat of the party's central committee.

Organizations including the UN and Human Rights Watch (HRW) say that China is holding Uighurs in what it calls "re-education camps" but those with relatives inside call "concentration camps".

Inside, prisoners are allegedly forced to reject Islamic practices and anything seen as contrary to China's dominant Han culture.

Chinese authorities deny that the internment camps exist but say petty criminals are sent to vocational "training centers".