

Bitterness On Display At Peace Talks

GENEVA (AP) — The bitterness and rancor stirred by Syria's civil war were on full display this week at peace talks in Switzerland — and not just in the closed room where rival delegations are seeking a way to end the three-year conflict.

For the first time since the country devolved into its bloody civil war, supporters and opponents of President Bashar Assad — many of them journalists — are meeting face to face. The mix is producing more than just awkward moments between people with vastly different views.

In the hallways of the U.N.'s European headquarters and on the manicured lawns outside, tempers have flared. Scuffles have broken out as journalists interrupt rival reports, government officials have received extraordinary public grillings, and a distraught mother confronted the Syrian government delegation at their hotel.

More than 130,000 people have died since the uprising against Assad began in March 2011, and millions of people have been uprooted from their homes. The conflict has pitted neighbor against neighbor. People who were once friends have stopped talking to each other. Journalists who once worked together have been separated. Sectarian tensions, once tamped down under Assad's grip, have exploded into the open.

Allies Not Included In Exec. Orders

WASHINGTON (AP) — For some White House allies, the long list of executive actions President Barack Obama announced in his State of the Union address was marred by a few glaring omissions.

Gay rights advocates are seething over Obama's refusal to grant employment discrimination protections to gays and lesbians working for federal contractors, safeguards they have been seeking for years. And some immigration overhaul supporters were disappointed that he did not act on his own to halt deportations, which have soared during his presidency and angered many Hispanics.

On both issues, White House officials say the place for action is in Congress, where successful legislation would be far more sweeping than the steps the president could take by himself. But work on an employment non-discrimination bill and an overhaul of the nation's immigration laws is stalled on Capitol Hill, leaving advocates perplexed as to why their calls for executive action did not fit into Obama's vow to act "when and wherever" Congress will not.

Egypt Army Chief Could Be President

CAIRO (AP) — Unknown only two years ago, the head of Egypt's military, Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, is riding on a wave of popular fervor that is almost certain to carry him to election as president. Many Egyptians now hail him as the nation's savior after he ousted the Islamists from power and as the only figure strong enough to lead.

Still, if he becomes president, el-Sissi runs enormous risks. His presidency would enmesh the military even deeper into politics, putting the credibility of the powerful institution on the line if he fails to resolve the country's woes. Turmoil may only increase with a backlash from Islamists, who now despise el-Sissi for his ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi and for the brutal crackdown on their ranks that has arrested thousands and killed hundreds since.

And there is little indication of how he would rule. Secular critics fear a return of an autocracy similar to that led by Hosni Mubarak for nearly 30 years until his ouster in 2011's popular uprising. El-Sissi has said it is impossible to now return to Mubarak's style of rule and that the country must move to democracy.

But elements of Mubarak's police state — including top security officials and the business elite — are among his fervent supporters, and the crackdown on Islamists has already expanded into a wider suppression of dissent.

Ukraine Protesters Offered Amnesty

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's parliament on Wednesday passed a measure offering amnesty to those arrested in two months of protests, but only if demonstrators vacate most of the buildings they occupy. The move was quickly greeted with contempt by the opposition.

The measure was put forth by a lawmaker from the party of President Viktor Yanukovich, who is casting about for a way to end the protests, which are calling for his resignation. The measure was a softer version of an earlier proposal to only offer amnesty if all protests dispersed.

But the opposition regards the arrests during the protests — 328 by one lawmaker's count — as fundamentally illegitimate.

"In reality, parliament has just passed a law on hostages. The authorities have themselves recognized that they are taking hostages, as terrorists so they can trade the hostages," said Oleh Tyahnybok, leader of the Svoboda party and one of the protests' top figures, according to the Interfax news agency.

That disdain was echoed in Kiev's central Independence Square, where protesters have set up a large tent camp and conducted round-the-clock demonstrations since early December.

Fed To Slow Monthly Bond Purchases

WASHINGTON (AP) — Given the U.S. economy's growing strength, the Federal Reserve pushed ahead Wednesday with a plan to shrink its bond-buying program, even though the prospect of reduced stimulus and higher interest rates has rattled global markets.

The central bank said it will cut its monthly bond purchases starting in February by \$10 billion to \$65 billion. It also reaffirmed a plan to keep short-term rates at record lows to try to reassure investors that it will keep supporting an economy that's stronger than at any point since the recession yet remains less than fully healthy.

The Fed's decision came in a statement after the final policy meeting of Ben Bernanke, who will step down Friday after eight years as chairman. He will be succeeded by Vice Chair Janet Yellen.

Snow, Ice Send Atlanta Reeling

BY DAVID CRARY AND RAY HENRY
Associated Press

ATLANTA — Thousands of Atlanta students stranded all night long in their schools were reunited with their parents Wednesday, while rescuers rushed to deliver blankets, food, gas and a ride home to countless shivering motorists stopped cold by a storm that paralyzed the business capital of the South with less than 3 inches of snow.

As National Guardsmen and state troopers fanned out, Mayor Kasim Reed and Georgia Gov. Nathan Deal found themselves on the defensive, acknowledging the storm preparations could have been better. But Deal also blamed forecasters, saying he was led to believe it wouldn't be so bad.

The icy weather wreaked similar havoc across much of the South, closing schools and highways, grounding flights and contributing to at least a dozen deaths from traffic accidents and a mobile home fire.

Yet it was Atlanta, home to major corporations and the world's busiest airport, that was Exhibit A for how a Southern city could be sent reeling by winter weather that, in the North, might be no more than an inconvenience.

The mayor admitted the city could have directed schools, businesses and government offices to stagger their closings on Tuesday afternoon, as the storm began, rather than dismissing everyone at the same time.

The result was gridlock on freeways that are jammed even on normal days. Countless vehicles were stranded and many of them abandoned. Officials said 239 children spent Tuesday night aboard school buses; thousands of others stayed overnight in their schools.

One woman's 12-mile commute home took 16 hours. Another woman gave birth while stuck in traffic; police arrived just in time to help. Drivers who gave up trying to get home took shelter at fire stations, churches and grocery stores.

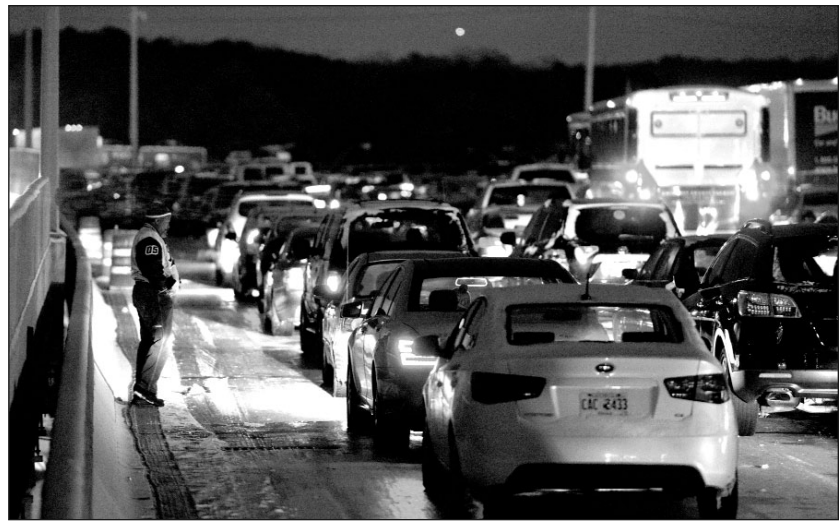
One traffic death was reported in Atlanta — that of a man killed in a crash.

"I'm not thinking about a grade right now," the mayor said when asked about the city's response. "I'm thinking about getting people out of their cars."

National Guardsmen in Humvees, state troopers and transportation crews delivered food and other relief, and by Wednesday night, Deal said all Atlanta-area schoolchildren were back home with their parents.

Atlanta was crippled by an ice storm in 2011, and officials had vowed not to be caught unprepared again. But in this case, few closings or other measures were ordered ahead of time.

Deal, who is up for re-election in November, said warnings could have been posted along highways earlier and farther



HYOSUB SHIN/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/MCT
A motorist steps out and gets some fresh air as he looks at gridlocked cars on the snow-covered I-85 Northbound near GA 400 around 1:30 am Wednesday, in Atlanta.

out Tuesday. But he also fended off criticism.

"I would have acted sooner, and I think we learn from that and then we will act sooner the next time," Deal told reporters.

"But we don't want to be accused of crying wolf. Because if we had been wrong, y'all would have all been in here saying, 'Do you know how many millions of dollars you cost the economies of the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia by shutting down businesses all over this city and this state?'"

Deal faulted government forecasters, saying they warned that the storm would strike south of Atlanta and the city would get no more than a dusting of snow.

However, the National Weather Service explicitly cautioned on Monday that snow-covered roads "will make travel difficult or impossible." And around 3:30 a.m. Tuesday, the agency issued a winter storm warning for metro Atlanta and cautioned people not to travel except in an emergency.

Around the time the traffic jam started, Deal and Reed were at an award ceremony recognizing the mayor as the "2014 Georgian of the Year." Deal spokesman Brian Robinson said the governor left before 1:30 p.m. and was in constant contact with emergency officials.

Among the commuters trapped in the gridlock was Jessica Troy, who described her commute home to the suburb of Smyrna as a slow-motion obstacle course on sheets of ice.

"We literally would go 5 feet and sit for two hours," Troy said after she and a co-worker who rode with her finally made it home about 10:30 a.m. Wednesday. They spent more than 16 hours in the car, covering 12 miles.

The standstill gave Troy time to call her parents and send text messages to friends, letting them know she was OK. By

3 a.m. her car was stuck on a freeway entrance ramp. She put it in park, left the heat running and tried to get some sleep.

"I slept for an hour and it was not comfortable," Troy said. "Most people sat the entire night with no food, no water, no bathroom. We saw people who had children. It was a dire situation."

After daybreak, a few good Samaritans appeared, going car-to-car with bottles of water and cookies. Traffic started moving again about 8:30.

Temperatures in Atlanta were forecast to dip as low as 16 Wednesday night, then gradually rise to the mid-50s by Friday.

Elsewhere in the South:

- Alabama officials said rescuers and medics in helicopters were flying over hard-hit counties on search-and-rescue missions. State troopers said five people were killed in traffic accidents that may have been weather-related.

- Amid freezing temperatures in Mississippi, four people — including two small children — died in a mobile home fire blamed on a faulty space heater. The highway patrol said several abandoned vehicles on Interstate 59 near Hattiesburg were broken into.

- In South Carolina, the Highway Patrol responded to almost 820 collisions statewide between 4 p.m. Tuesday and 4 a.m. Wednesday.

- Schools across much of North Carolina were closed Wednesday, and some colleges canceled class, including North Carolina State University. The state highway patrol said the weather was a factor in traffic accidents that killed two people.

- The Virginia coast was blanketed in up to 10 inches of snow Wednesday morning. Tens of thousands of sailors were told to stay away from the region's Navy bases unless they were essential.

- Ice closed more 20 highways in Louisiana. Normally busy areas of New Orleans were quiet.

Dance

From Page 1

Together, the women's shelter and the FVC provided a total of 17,674 support services in 2013, including crisis counseling, support groups, food assistance, shelter, assistance finding housing, assistance finding work, safe exchanges between parent and child, supervised visitations to re-united parent and child, and helping victims of violence understand the cycle of abuse and start in the healing process.

"Every day at the YWCC is about helping those who are struggling — struggling with escaping an abusive relationship or struggling to build a strong healthy connection with their child," Warren-Johnson said.

Added interim FVC coordinator Kayla Connelly, "I believe the growth in these numbers reflects a true need for our agency in the Yankton community. By providing a safe and neutral environment for children and adults to see one another, family relationships are given the opportunity to develop and flourish."

Warren-Johnson said that,

as the need for YWCC services has risen, the organization has had to look to the community for financial support. The YWCC held its first "Heart to Heart" event, a mystery dinner theatre and auction fundraiser, last year.

"That was such a big success — we raised over \$25,000 — that we knew we had to make this an annual event," she said.

Hosted by Marc Bies, "Heart to Heart with Yankton's Dancing Stars" will begin with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m., followed by dancing activities.

The "Dancing Stars" include Mariah LaCroix and Jase Likness, Mandi Ewald and Andrew Baker, Brook Brady and Cody Lukkes, Courtney Clark and Mark

McCurry, and Todd and Mary Woods.

"Just like on the TV show where you can call in and cast your vote, the audience that evening will have a chance to purchase a vote for the winning couple," Warren-Johnson said.

The night will also feature live music presented by Todd Carr and auctions led by Dan Specht. Auction items include a Solo cup party, wine package, dinner party, grill package, power plant tour, beer package, flight lesson, diamond pendant necklace and red high heel shoe wine bottle holders.

Sponsors for the event include Dakota Trailer, JMMWH Law Firm, Goglin Funeral Home, Hy-Vee and Investment Planning Inc.

Warren-Johnson encourages anyone interested in supporting the YWCC to attend the fundraiser, as every contribution helps.

"One ticket purchased would ensure we have support group for an entire week, and that impacts 10 to 12 women each week. And two tickets would ensure we would have a crisis hotline available for an entire week-end," she said. "Every ticket purchase is truly making a difference for our agency."

For ticket information, contact the YWCC at 605-665-4811.

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at twitter.com/d_bartos/. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net/.

Serving the Yankton Area for Over 14 Years!

It's not just a body shop, it's...

Justra's Body Shop

2806 Fox Run Pkwy., Yankton, SD 57078
(605) 665-3929

- Paintless Dent Repair
- Glass Installation
- Insurance Work
- Lifetime Paint Warranty
- Frame Straightening
- Loaner Car Available
- Restoration Work
- Down Draft Bake Booth

We guarantee that everything we do is done in a professional and hassle-free manner. We don't see our customers as customers. We see them as our friends. Stop by and see John at Justra's Body Shop for all your auto body and paint needs.

CorTrust Mortgage Would Like To Welcome

Abby Cook
Mortgage Specialist

605.665.6423

Located at:
CorTrust Bank
110 Cedar St
Yankton, SD 57078

NMLS# 699172

Buying • Building • Remodeling • Refinancing

Equal Housing Lender ID 458038 cortrustmortgage.com

MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE

Center for Active Learners

Hady's Creation

Dates: Tuesdays - Feb 4, 11, 18, 25
Time: 10:00 am - 11:30 am
Location: Bede 237
Instructor: Dr. Kenneth Tice

Come explore Hady's great oratorio as we dive into the score of the well-known classical masterpiece. This class will go through the entire work, starting with an overall introduction and understanding of the piece on a large scale.

Dr. Tice is chair of the Music Department and Director of Choral Activities at Mount Marty College. He conducts choirs and teaches various classes in music, voice, and music education. He is also the founder and Artistic Director of the Mount Marty Choral Union.

Cosmology: From the Big Bang to the Present and Beyond...

Dates: Thursdays - Feb 6, 13, 20, 27
Time: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm
Location: Library 205
Instructor: Dr. Ryan Maderak

How was the universe formed, how has it evolved since then, and what is its fate? We will discuss cosmology, the study of the evolution of our universe.

Dr. Ryan Maderak, Assistant Professor of Physics, joined the Mount Marty faculty in 2012.

Register Now!
Spring 2014 Session 1
begins February 4!

MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE

1105 W. 8th St. | YANKTON, SD | (605) 688-1495 | WWW.MTMC.EDU/BENEDICTINEINSTITUTE
Sponsored by the Mount Marty College Benedictine Institute of Leadership, Ethics and Social Justice