

# Obama's Africa Visit Troubles Human Rights Groups

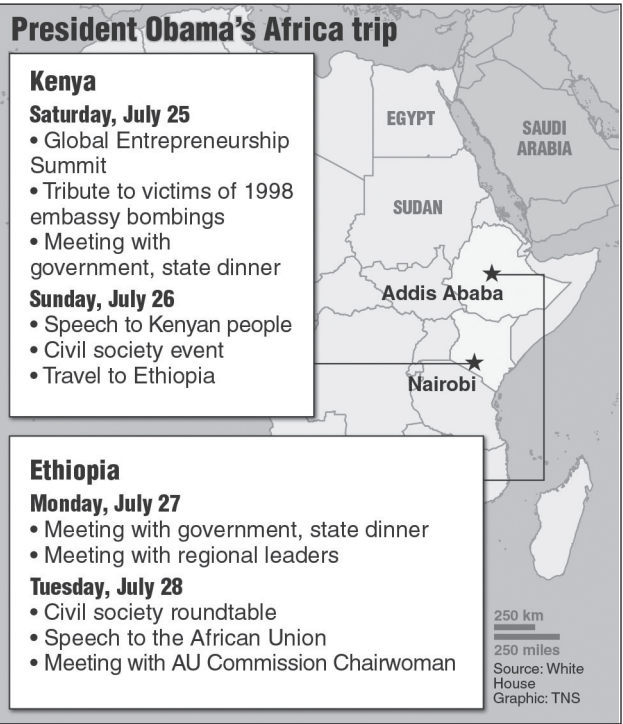
BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's trip to Kenya and Ethiopia is drawing fresh criticism that the two countries are heavily-handed on human rights and basic democratic freedoms. Obama will become the first sitting U.S. president to visit Kenya, his ancestral homeland, when he arrives Friday to attend a business summit and meetings with President Uhuru Kenyatta. Obama will become the first U.S. president to travel to Ethiopia when he lands there Sunday to confer with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and to address the African Union, which is headquartered there.

"While both countries face real security threats, we are concerned by the way in which each government has responded, often with abusive security measures and increased efforts to stifle civil society and the media," Human Rights Watch and other advocacy organizations and analysts said in a letter to Obama. "Many of these initiatives undermine core human rights protections and the rule of law and are also counterproductive when it comes to reducing insecurity."

Obama, who departed Washington on Thursday night, said one of the themes he will stress during the trip is that the economic growth that Africans seek depends on good governance, including free and fair elections; strong, democratic institutions; freedom of speech and the press; vibrant civic participation and respect for human rights.

"Some African nations have made impressive progress on these fronts," he said in an opinion piece published Thursday by



The Root, a website with a largely African-American audience. "Others have not. My trip will be an opportunity to address these issues candidly, both publicly and privately in my meetings with leaders."

Ten members of Congress were traveling to Kenya aboard Air Force One with the president, including Congressional Black Caucus Chairman Rep. G.K. Butterfield of North Carolina, other caucus members and Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake, the lone Republican.

Obama infrequently takes lawmakers with him on trips. Flake is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Africa and has supported Obama's policies on immigration and re-engagement with Cuba. A different group of 10 lawmakers were scheduled to travel back from Ethiopia with Obama.

The White House says

the trip, Obama's fourth to the continent as president, is an important opportunity for him to promote trade and investment with Africa, but to also check in with important Horn of Africa partners in the fight against Islamic extremism. The U.S. and Kenya work together to counter al-Shabab, the Islamic militant group based in neighboring Somalia that has carried out numerous attacks in Kenya, including the mass killing of university students in April, the 2013 attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, the capital, and the bombing of the U.S. Embassy, also in Nairobi, in 1998.

Ethiopia shares intelligence with the U.S. as part of the anti-terrorism effort and also has sent troops across the border into Somalia to address instability there.

The letter to Obama said he should put the "pressing human rights concerns" in

Kenya and Ethiopia "at the forefront of your discussions."

The letter expressed concern that both countries are using national security concerns to stifle the media as well as civic participation and, in Kenya, to crack down on Somali refugees who have fled the instability in their home country. Kenya's deputy president, William Ruto, is also under indictment by the International Criminal Court for alleged links to violence after the 2007 election. The ICC recently dropped similar charges against Kenyatta, an outcome that increased the odds of an Obama visit to the East African nation.

The Ethiopian government earlier this month released several journalists and bloggers who had been arrested in April 2014 on charges of incitement and terrorism, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Ethiopia is known for media oppression and the journalism watchdog group ranks it as the second-worst jailer of journalists in Africa, after Eritrea. The country's ruling coalition also won a sweeping victory in parliamentary elections in May that Western nations criticized as unfair.

"With all the countries in Africa, and a visit to two countries, to pick Ethiopia is a very bad ome, I think," said Jennifer Cooke, director of the Africa program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Susan Rice, Obama's national security adviser, said "there is nothing unique" about Obama's visit to Africa. The president often meets with foreign leaders with whom the administration has concerns about how they treat their people, she said Wednesday while previewing the trip for reporters.

## Turkey To Allow US To Use Key Air Base

WASHINGTON (AP) — Turkey has agreed to let the U.S. military launch airstrikes against the Islamic State from a key air base near the Syrian border, senior U.S. officials said Thursday, giving a boost to the U.S.-led coalition while drawing Turkey deeper into the conflict.

President Barack Obama and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan finalized the deal in a phone call Wednesday, officials said, following months of U.S. appeals and delicate negotiations over the use of Incirlik and other bases in Turkey. Frustrated by Obama's focus on fighting IS instead of Syrian President Bashar Assad, Turkey's government had resisted the move, but in recent days a surge in Islamic State activity in Turkey has brought concerns about the militant group to the forefront.

American officials said access to the base in southern Turkey, not far from IS strongholds across the border in Syria, would allow the U.S. to move more swiftly and nimbly against IS targets. If the agreement holds, the U.S.-led coalition will be positioned to conduct better surveillance over Syria and act quicker on intelligence than when it was limited to launching flights from places like Iraq, Jordan and the Gulf states.

Under the deal, the U.S. military will be allowed to launch manned and unmanned flights from Incirlik; in the past, only unmanned drone flights were allowed.

Turkey has yet to publicly confirm the agreement, which U.S. officials discussed on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to comment publicly. Citing operational security, the White House declined to confirm the agreement, but noted that Obama and Erdogan had agreed to "deepen our cooperation" against IS in their phone call Wednesday.

## US 'Fleeced' In Iran Nuclear Deal

WASHINGTON (AP) — Countering Republican criticism, Secretary of State John Kerry declared Thursday it is "fantasy plain and simple" to claim that President Barack Obama failed to insist on enough restraints on Iran's nuclear program before agreeing to lift economic sanctions long in place.

"So what's your plan? ... Totally go to war?" he challenged lawmakers who want to torpedo the deal.

Republicans were unpersuaded — and said so — at an occasionally contentious Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing that marked the opening of a new phase in the administration's drive to prevent Congress from undermining the accord.

"You guys have been bamboozled," said Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, complaining that the agreement wouldn't permit neutral testing at Iran's Parchin military complex to guard against cheating.

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., the panel's chairman, told Kerry moments after opening the hearing, "Not unlike a hotel guest that leaves only with a hotel bathrobe on his back, I believe you've been fleeced." He later sought to soften the criticism to avoid singling anyone out, saying, "We've been fleeced."

## 3 Dead In Movie Theater Shooting

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP) — A gunman opened fire at a movie theater in Louisiana on Thursday evening, killing two people and injuring at least seven others before shooting himself, officials said.

The gunman, a 58-year-old "lone white male," fired his weapon "numerous times" before shooting himself at the Grand Theatre in Lafayette, city Police Chief Jim Craft told a news conference.

Craft said police know the gunman's identity but are not releasing it. He said the shooter's body was still inside the theater and that a coroner was on the scene. Earlier in the evening, Acadian Ambulance Vice President Clay Henry had told The Associated Press that the shooter was pronounced dead on arrival at a hospital.

Craft said those who were injured had injuries ranged from non-life-threatening to critical.

There were about 100 people in the theater at the time of the shooting, Sgt. Brooks David of the Louisiana State Police told CNN.

The shooting happened about 20 minutes into a 7 p.m. showing of the movie "Trainwreck," The Louisiana Advertiser quoted theatergoer Katie Domingue as saying.

"We heard a loud pop we thought was a firecracker," Domingue told the newspaper. Domingue said she saw "an older white man" standing up and shooting down into the theater, but not in her direction.

"He wasn't saying anything. I didn't hear anybody screaming either," Domingue said.

Domingue told the newspaper she heard about six shots before she and her fiance ran to the nearest exist, leaving behind her shoes and purse.

The Louisiana shooting occurred three years after James Holmes entered a crowded movie theater in suburban Denver and opened fire during the premier of a Batman film, killing 12 people and injuring 70 others. A jury last week quickly convicted Holmes on 165 counts of murder, attempted murder and other charges, rejecting defense arguments that he was insane and suffering delusions that drove him to the July 20, 2012, attack.

## Bailout Talks Back In Athens, As Tough Conditions Approved

BY NICHOLAS PAPHITIS  
AND DEREK GATOPOULOS  
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece — Discussions over Greece's third bailout in five years are set to begin in Athens imminently after Greece's parliament approved Thursday tough new conditions set by European creditors.

Officials in Athens and at the European Union said negotiators are expected to start arriving on Friday, marking the first time high-level talks will be held in the Greek capital since Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' left-wing government assumed power in late January.

The news came hours after the Greek parliament approved a second round of reforms demanded by Greece's creditors before the negotiations could start over a three-year financial bailout expected to be worth 85 billion euros (\$93 billion).

Without the money, Greece would be unable to pay the debts due over the coming three years and would likely be forced to leave the euro, Europe's shared currency. Last week's decision at a summit of the eurozone's 19 leaders to open up bailout discussions provided certain conditions were met by Athens has helped ease the sense of economic crisis that was enveloping Greece.

Over the past week, parliament has approved two sets of creditor demands — the first introduced sweeping sales tax increases, the second concerned judicial and banking reforms.

Despite facing a rebellion among his own party's ranks in both votes, Tsipras' coalition government has survived. He relied on opposition parties to push the measures through.

"We have chosen a compromise that forces us to implement a program in

which we do not believe, and we will implement it because the alternatives are tough," Tsipras said. "We are summoned today to legislate under a state of emergency."

Both sides hope discussions will conclude by Aug. 20, when Greece has a payment of a little more than 3 billion euros (\$3.2 billion) due to the European Central Bank.

A government official in Athens, who asked not to be identified because negotiations had not formally started, said Greece was determined to resist any further conditions being set for the third bailout.

Greece has committed to reducing state spending on pensions, but says it need more time to draw up measures that spare low-income retirees further hardship. Major pension changes were not included in either round of reforms approved by parliament.

The start of the formal discussions in Athens shows how times have changed since Tsipras' radical left Syriza party was elected on a promise to bring an end to the austerity that it blamed for many of the country's economic ills.

While in opposition, Syriza was hugely critical of the so-called troika — bailout inspectors from the European Commission, ECB, and International Monetary Fund who regularly came to the capital to discuss the Greek economy.

After assuming office, Tsipras declared that the "troika" was finished, and refused to let representatives from the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund negotiators into Greek ministry buildings, insisting instead on discreet meetings in Athens hotels, and talks in Brussels.

Now, the ministry inspections look set to start again.

The IMF will not be directly involved in the discussions in Athens. The fund has been critical of many of the demands insisted upon by Greece's European creditors and is insisting on deep and meaningful debt relief for the country.

Despite years of austerity that's seen the annual budget deficit fall dramatically, Greece's debt burden has increased because the economy has shrunk by a quarter. Figures this week showed Greece's debt at the end of the first quarter improved slightly to just below 170 percent. Still, it's the highest rate in the whole of the eurozone.

"We feel that debt relief is required," IMF spokesman Gerry Rice said in Washington. Rice added that it was not clear when negotiators from the IMF would rejoin the talks.

Following the two parliamentary votes that's allowed the ECB to raise its emergency liquidity assistance to Greek banks, the Greek government will be hoping the economy stabilizes somewhat following a crisis-ridden period that's seen strict capital controls imposed amid fears over the country's future in the euro.

Banks reopened Monday after being shuttered for more than three weeks, albeit for limited transactions. Daily withdrawals at ATMs are still limited to 60 euros (\$65) per account holder.

Dissent within Tsipras' Syriza party twice came close to toppling the government, and has fuelled speculation of an earlier-than-expected general election in fall. But party critics insisted they continued to back Tsipras while disagreeing over the terms of the third bailout.

"Diversity is the strength of our party, not its weakness," former minister and outspoken dissenter Panagiotis Lafazanis said.

## Scientists Find Closest Thing Yet To Earth-Sun Twin System

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Scientists have identified a "close cousin" to Earth that's orbiting a sun-like star and might harbor life.

"It is the closest thing that we have to another place that somebody else might call home," said Jon Jenkins from NASA's Ames Research Center in California.

The researchers announced their discovery Thursday based on observations from NASA's Kepler

space telescope. This older, bigger cousin to Earth is called Kepler-452b. What makes this planet

remarkable is that it orbits its star at about the same distance that Earth orbits the sun.

## UNIQUE TAN CUSTOMER APPRECIATION SALE

July 27 -29

Door Prizes

40% Off Tanning Packages & Lotions

Buy 1, Get 1 FREE on Spray Tans

2007 Broadway, Yankton

605-665-0325

# RED HOT DEALS!

July 15th - July 29th

## Hot Deals on all Hot Tubs!

Close out prices on select models

**LEISURE WORLD, INC.**  
1900 Broadway Ave, Yankton, SD • 605-665-1240  
2500 S. 13th St., Norfolk, NE • 402-371-8425  
[www.leisureworldsd.com](http://www.leisureworldsd.com)

## OBITUARIES

### Norman Jensen

Norman D. Jensen, 86, of Vermillion, SD passed away Thursday, July 23, 2015 at Sanford Vermillion Care Center.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Kober Funeral Home of Vermillion.