

U.N. Says Syrian Refugees Top 1 Million

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria’s accelerating humanitarian crisis hit a grim milestone Wednesday: The number of U.N.-registered refugees topped 1 million — half of them children — described by an aid worker as a “human river” of thousands spilling out of the war-ravaged country every day.

Nearly 4 million of Syria’s 22 million people have been driven from their homes by the civil war. Of the displaced, 2 million have sought cover in camps and makeshift shelters across Syria, 1 million have registered as refugees in neighboring Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt, and several hundred thousand more fled the country but haven’t signed up with the U.N. refugee agency.

The West has refrained from military intervention in the two-year-old battle to oust Syrian President Bashar Assad, a conflict that has claimed more than 70,000 lives, and many Syrians hold the international community responsible for their misery.

“The refugee numbers swelled because the world community is sitting idly, watching the tyrant Assad killing innocent people,” said Mohammed Ammari, a 32-year-old refugee in the Zaatari camp straddling Jordan’s border with Syria. “Shame, shame, shame. The world should be ashamed.”

Despite an overall deadlock on the battlefield, the rebels have made recent gains, especially in northern Syria. On Wednesday, they completed their capture of Raqqa, the first major city to fall completely into rebel hands, activists said.

Israel-Syria Cease-Fire Detained By 30 Fighters

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Armed fighters linked to the Syrian opposition detained more than 20 U.N. peacekeepers Wednesday in the increasingly volatile zone separating Israeli and Syrian troops on the Golan Heights, a new escalation in the spillover of Syria’s civil war.

The U.N. Security Council demanded their immediate and unconditional release.

The capture comes a week after the announcement that a member of the peacekeeping force, known as UNDOF, is missing.

Russia’s U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, the current Security Council president, said talks are under way between U.N. officials from the peacekeeping force and the captors.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous, who briefed the council behind closed doors, identified the captors as being from a group associated with the Syrian armed opposition, Churkin said.

Vatican Imposes A Media Blackout At Conclave

VATICAN CITY (AP) — In the end, American-style transparency was no match for the Vatican’s obsession with secrecy.

Cardinals attending closed-door discussions ahead of the conclave to elect the next pope imposed a media blackout Wednesday, forcing the cancellation of the popular daily press briefings by U.S. cardinals that had provided crucial insights into the deliberations.

The official reason for the blackout was that some details of the secret discussions about the problems in the church appeared in the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*.

But speculation mounted that the underlying aim of the blackout was to silence the Americans, who have been vocal in their calls for disclosure about allegations of corruption and dysfunction in the Holy See’s governance before they enter the conclave to elect a successor to Benedict XVI.

As a result, the conflict appears to be a microcosm of the likely battle lines heading into the election: American and German cardinals have indicated they want a pope who will impose some order on the Vatican’s inner workings, while the Vatican-based cardinals are defending their record and seeking to end the discussion.

Egypt Court Suspends Parliamentary Elections

CAIRO (AP) — An Egyptian court on Wednesday ordered the suspension of parliamentary elections scheduled to begin in April, opening a legal battle likely to delay the vote and deepening the political crisis between the Islamist president and his opponents that has polarized the nation for months.

The new confusion surrounding the election underlined the paralysis gripping Egypt, between political deadlock, infighting among state institutions, a faltering economy and a wave of protests, strikes and clashes against Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood that has spiraled for months around the country.

In the Suez Canal city of Port Said, scene of heavy clashes between protesters and police that have left six dead since Sunday, the violence entered a fourth day, dragging in the military. Protesters hurled stones at police firing tear gas, as army troops struggled to keep the two sides apart.

Morsi’s Islamist supporters and some in the public exhausted by the turmoil have viewed the parliamentary elections as a step toward bringing some stability, accusing the opposition of stirring up unrest to derail the voting. But the mainly liberal and secular opposition had called a boycott of the vote, saying Morsi must first find some political consensus and ease the wave of popular anger. Whether or not the opposition boycotts, the Islamists would likely win a parliamentary majority.

The new court ruling is unlikely to defuse the tension, bringing the dispute into the judiciary, which has repeatedly been used by the various sides in Egypt’s political battles.

Storm Strikes Mid-Atlantic: 250K No Power

WASHINGTON (AP) — A winter storm marched into the Mid-Atlantic region Wednesday, dumping nearly two feet of snow in some places and knocking out power to about 250,000 homes and businesses. It largely spared the nation’s capital, which was expecting much worse and had all but shut down because of dire forecasts.

Officials didn’t want a repeat of 2011, when a rush-hour snowstorm stranded commuters for hours, so they told people to stay off the roads and gave workers the day off. Dubbed the “snowquaster,” the storm closed government offices, just as the automatic budget cuts known as the sequester were expected to do.

The storm pummeled the nation’s midsection on Tuesday, killing at least four people in weather-related traffic accidents. It was forecast to head to the northeast on Thursday, bringing strong winds, more snow and the possibility of coastal flooding to New England.

In Washington, where as much as 10 inches were forecast, the storm did little but drop harmless snowflakes that rapidly melted amid warmer-than-expected temperatures.

“They just say that it might snow and the whole city shuts down,” said Sheri Sable, who was out walking her two dogs in light rain and marveled at how even the dog park she frequents failed to open at 7 a.m.

Microsoft Fined \$733M By European Watchdog

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The European Union has fined Microsoft (euro) 561 million (\$733 million) for breaking a pledge to offer personal computer users a choice of Internet browsers when they install the company’s flagship Windows operating system.

The penalty imposed by the EU’s executive arm, the Commission, is a first for Brussels: no company has ever failed to keep its end of a bargain with EU authorities before.

In 2009, Microsoft Corp. struck a broad settlement with the Commission to resolve disputes over the company’s abuse of the dominance of Windows, which had spanned more than a decade.

Back then, the company agreed to pay (euro) 860 million and promised to give Windows users the option of choosing another browser rather than having Microsoft’s Internet Explorer automatically installed on their machines.

But Microsoft failed to stick to the deal for some 15 million installations of Windows 7 software in Europe from May 2011 until July 2012. The company admitted the failure last year, adding that it was a mistake.

Romney Takes New Position At Son’s Firm

BOSTON (AP) — Mitt Romney has a new position with his son’s Boston-area venture capital firm.

Last year’s Republican presidential nominee will serve as chairman of the executive committee for Solamere Capital. The firm was founded by Romney’s oldest son, Tagg, and the national finance committee chairman for his presidential campaign, Spencer Zwick.

Romney has been a limited partner in Solamere, and investors have been sent letters announcing his elevated role. The Associated Press obtained a copy of one of the letters on Wednesday.

Romney has just begun to emerge from months of isolation at his home in southern California. In a Sunday television interview, he said “it kills me” to have lost the presidential race.

He delivers his first public speech since the loss next week in Washington.

A Day Of Tears Of Chavez’s Death In Venezuela

BY PAUL HAVEN
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — By the hundreds of thousands, Hugo Chavez’s tearful supporters carried their dead president through streets still plastered with his smiling image, an epic farewell to a larger-than-life leader remembered simply as “our commander.”

In a display of raw, and at times, unruly emotion, generations of Venezuelans, many dressed in the red of Chavez’s socialist party, filled Caracas’ streets Wednesday to remember the man who dominated their country for 14 years before succumbing to cancer.

Chavez’s flag-draped coffin floated over hundreds of thousands of supporters as it made its way atop an open hearse on a seven-hour journey to a military academy in the capital. Mourners followed the lead of a grim drum major, with some shouting out “nuestro comandante” — “our commander,” in English — as the coffin passed.

At the academy, Chavez’s family and close advisers, as well as the presidents of Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay, attended a funeral Mass before the president’s open casket. Later, the public slowly filed past in a show of respect expected to go on late into the night.

But even amid the outpouring of grief, questions about the country’s future could not be put off for long, with worries amplified by the government’s lack of regard for the letter of the constitution and the military’s eagerness to choose political sides.

Vice President Nicolas Maduro, the late president’s hand-picked successor, and Bolivian President Evo Morales, one of his staunchest allies, mingled with the crowd, at one point falling to the ground in the jostle of bodies pushing in every direction. Military officers and Cabinet members ringed the president’s coffin, stone-faced with grief.

Other mourners pumped their fists and held aloft images of the late president, amid countless waving yellow, blue and red Venezuelan flags.

“The fight goes on! Chavez lives!” the mourners shouted in unison, many through eyes red from crying late into the night.



PEDRO PORTAL/EL NUEVO HERALD/MCT

Thousands of supporters of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez pay respects as his funeral procession travels through Caracas, Venezuela, on Wednesday. Escorted by his family, friends and government members, the procession makes its way to the Military Academy for a final tribute that will last through Friday.

Chavez’s bereaved mother, Elena Frias de Chavez, leaned against her son’s casket, while a priest read a prayer before the procession left the military hospital where Chavez died Tuesday at age 58. His funeral is scheduled for Friday.

“I feel so much pain. So much pain,” said Yamile Gil, a 38-year-old housewife. “We never wanted to see our president like this. We will always love him.”

Others who bitterly opposed Chavez’s take-no-prisoners brand of socialism said they were sorry about his death, but hopeful it would usher in a less confrontational, more business-friendly era in this major oil-producing country. Under his leadership, the state expropriated key industries, raised taxes on the rich and forced many opponents into exile.

“I am not happy that he has died, but I can’t be sad either,” said Delia Ramirez, a 32-year-old accountant who stayed away from the procession. “This man sowed hatred and division among Venezuelans.”

Even as Chavistas said their goodbyes, a sense of foreboding gripped the country as it awaited word on what might come next. Many Venezuelans, fearful of possible violence, stocked up on food and fuel as the country pondered whether the former paratrooper’s socialist agenda would survive him, and for how long.

The 1999 constitution that Chavez himself pushed through mandates that elections be called within 30 days, but Chavez’s top lieutenants have often improvised with the law.

The charter clearly states that the speaker of the National Assembly, in this case Diosdado Cabello, should become interim president if a head of state is forced to leave office within three years of his election. Chavez was re-elected only in October.

But Chavez anointed Maduro for that role, and the vice president has assumed the mantle even as the government announced he would represent the ruling socialist party in the presidential vote.

Some took to Twitter to denounce the move, citing Article 233 of the constitution, which establishes Cabello as the rightful president.

The military also appears to be showing firm support for Maduro, despite a constitutional mandate that it play no role in politics. In a late-night tweet, Venezuelan state television said the defense minister, Adm. Diego Molero, had pledged military support for Maduro’s candidacy against likely opposition candidate Henrique Capriles, raising concern among critics about the fairness of the vote.

Capriles, the 40-year-old

House Votes To Prevent March 27 Federal Shutdown

BY DAVID ESPO AND
ANDREW TAYLOR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Republicans pushed legislation through the House on Wednesday to prevent a government shutdown this month while easing the short-term impact of \$85 billion in spending cuts — at the same time previewing a longer-term plan to erase federal deficits without raising taxes.

President Barack Obama pursued a different path as the GOP asserted its budget priorities. He arranged to have dinner with several Republican senators at a hotel near the White House in search of bipartisan support for a deficit-cutting approach that includes the higher taxes he seeks as well as savings from Medicare and other benefit programs that they stress.

Any such compromise talks are unlikely to yield fruit for months, if then, although Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan, the author of the House Republican budget plan, expressed hope that some progress across party lines might be possible later in the year.

“I think this whole thing will come to a crescendo this summer, and we’re going to have to talk to each other to get an agreement about how to delay a debt crisis, how to save this country from a fiscal train wreck that’s coming,” said Ryan, who was the Republicans’ vice presidential candidate last year. He added that he had spoken with Obama in recent days, but he declined to provide details.

For now, the divided government’s immediate objectives are to prevent a shutdown of federal agencies on March 27, at the same time lawmakers and the White House look for ways to ease the impact of across-the-board spending cuts that kicked in less than a week ago.

The legislation that cleared the House on a bipartisan vote of 267-151 would do both, ensuring funding through the Sept. 30 end of the budget year while granting the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs greater flexibility in implementing their share of short-term spending cuts.

“This is all about whether or not we shut down the government. This is a bill to keep the government operating,” said Rep. Hal Rogers, the Kentucky Republican who chairs the House Appropriations Committee.

Minority Democrats appeared torn between a desire to support legislation to keep the government open and their goal of replacing at least half of the spending cuts with provisions to increase revenue.

“Instead of closing tax loopholes for corporate jets, they want to cut 4 million meals on wheels,” the party’s House leader, Rep. Nancy Pelosi of California, said of Republicans.

The bill passed with the support of 53 Democrats, more than a quarter of those voting.

It now goes to the Senate, where Democrats and the White House are deep in negotiations with Republicans on changes that would give the Department of Homeland Security and other domestic agencies the same type of flexibility in administering the spending cuts that the Pentagon would receive.

Obama’s dinner with Senate Republicans stemmed from a suggestion he made during a conversation recently with GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, according to a presidential aide. It also served as prelude to at least two trips to the Capitol in coming days as the chief executive meets with the rank and file of both parties in both houses.

The spending legislation was still pending on the House floor when Ryan began pulling back the curtain on his plan to eliminate

deficits in 10 years. The government ran a deficit of more than \$1 trillion for the past budget year, about \$200 billion less than the year before, and the total federal debt is about \$16 trillion.

To achieve his 10-year goal of producing a surplus, Ryan said he would incorporate the tax increases on the wealthy that Congress passed on Jan. 1 over the objections of many House Republicans. The hike translates into an estimated \$600 billion or more in additional revenue to the government.

The Wisconsin Republican also intends to retain the \$85 billion in spending cuts, which translate to a savings of \$900 billion or more over a decade, and renew without significant changes a controversial proposal to overhaul Medicare.

Speaking of spending in general, he said, “We’re making additional modest changes to get to balance.”

Ryan had earlier floated the


possibility of accelerating his Medicare proposal so it would apply to individuals currently older than 55.

Under pressure from some members of the rank and file, he decided against that — but drew criticism during the day from Democrats anyway.


“Every time they put in a budget, the first thing they do is ask seniors to sacrifice the most,” said Rep. Steve Israel of New York, who heads the Democrats’ campaign committee.

Ryan’s Medicare plan would give future retirees a choice between enrolling in the existing program or a roster of private alternatives, although in any case they would receive a monthly check from the government to defray the cost and be responsible for the difference.

In its previous forms, the plan also capped the overall cost of the program.



Introducing Dr. Adams Orthopedic Surgeon.



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Dr. Adams is originally from Yankton, completed his undergraduate degree at South Dakota State University, and is a graduate of The University of South Dakota School of Medicine.

Dr. Adams completed his orthopedic surgery residency at the University of Kansas-Wichita and a fellowship in spine surgery at the Twin Cities Spine Center in Minneapolis, MN. He is board certified in orthopedic surgery and has also been a faculty member for the University of Kansas-Wichita orthopedic surgery residency program.

He will provide care for a multitude of musculoskeletal conditions with a subspecialty focus in spine surgery. Conditions that he will treat include cervical and lumbar spinal stenosis, scoliosis, disk herniations, sciatica, arthroscopic rotator cuff repair, total joint replacement of the hip, knee and shoulder, fracture care, carpal tunnel surgery and athletic injuries.

He is a member of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, North American Spine Society, and Scoliosis Research Society.

Dr. Adams will begin seeing patients at the Yankton Medical Clinic, P.C. March 11, 2013.

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