

Activists: Syrian Security Kill 30

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian security forces opened fire Friday on protesters and hunted them down in house-to-house raids, killing about 30 people in the deadliest day in weeks in the country's 7-month-old uprising, activists said.

The popular revolt against Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime has proved remarkably resilient, with protests erupting every week despite the near-certainty the government will respond with bullets and tear gas. The U.N. estimates the regime crackdown on the protests has killed 3,000 people since March.

Much of the bloodshed Friday happened after the protests had ended and security forces armed with machine guns chased protesters and activists, according to opposition groups monitoring the demonstrations. Authorities disrupted telephone and Internet service, they said.

The Syrian opposition's two main activist groups, the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and the Local Coordinating Committees, gave figures for the protesters killed on Friday ranging from 29 to 37.

The flashpoints were Homs and Hama in central Syria, where opposition to the regime is strong. Hama is the site of a massacre nearly 30 years ago which has come to symbolize the ruthlessness of the Assad dynasty.

Man Opens Fire Outside Embassy In Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — A man armed with hand grenades and an automatic weapon opened fire outside the U.S. Embassy in Bosnia Friday in what authorities called a terrorist attack. A policeman and the gunman were wounded, but the embassy said none of its employees was hurt.

Sarajevo Mayor Alija Behmen said the gunman "got off a tram with a Kalashnikov and started shooting at the American Embassy." Witnesses told Bosnian television that the man urged pedestrians to move away, saying he was targeting only the embassy.

He wore a beard and was dressed in an outfit with short pants that reveal his ankles — typical for followers of the conservative Wahhabi branch of Islam.

One police officer guarding the building was wounded before police surrounded the gunman. After a 30-minute standoff, the sound of a single shot echoed and AP video showed the shooter slump to the ground.

Police arrested the wounded man — who one of Bosnia's three presidents said is a foreigner — and took him away in an ambulance as pedestrians cowered behind buildings and vehicles. Hospital spokeswoman Biljana Jandric told The Associated Press the gunman had a minor wound to his leg, and would spend the night at the hospital before being released into police custody.

Unscripted Romney Leaves Trail Of Comments

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mitt Romney may need a censor. For himself.

In the last few weeks in Nevada, the man who owns several homes told the state hit tough by the housing crisis: "Don't try and stop the foreclosure process. Let it run its course and hit the bottom."

At one point in Iowa, earlier this year, the former venture capitalist uttered, "Corporations are people," with the country in the midst of a debate over Wall Street vs. Main Street. At an event in economically suffering Florida, the retiree — who is a multimillionaire many times over — told out-of-work voters, "I'm also unemployed."

Over the past year, the Republican presidential candidate has amassed a collection of off-the-cuff comments that expose his vulnerabilities and, taken together, cast him as out-of-touch with Americans who face staggering unemployment, widespread foreclosures and a dire outlook on the economy.

So far, the foot-in-mouth remarks haven't seemed to affect his standing in the nomination race.

Border Patrol Quietly Halts Routine Checks

SEATTLE (AP) — The U.S. Border Patrol has quietly stopped its controversial practice of routinely searching buses, trains and airports for illegal immigrants at transportation hubs along the northern border and in the nation's interior, preventing agents from using what had long been an effective tool for tracking down people here illegally, The Associated Press has learned.

Current and former Border Patrol agents said field offices around the country began receiving the order last month — soon after the Obama administration announced that to ease an overburdened immigration system, it would allow many undocumented people to remain in the country while it focuses on deporting those who have committed crimes.

The routine bus, train and airport checks typically involved agents milling about and questioning people who appeared suspicious, and had long been criticized by immigrant rights groups. Critics said the tactic amounted to racial profiling and violated the civil liberties of travelers.

But agents said it was an effective way to catch unlawful immigrants, including smugglers and possible terrorists, who had evaded detection at the border, as well as people who had overstayed their visas. Often, those who evade detection head quickly for the nearest mass public transportation in hopes of reaching other parts of the country.

White House To Welcome Trick-Or-Treaters

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama will welcome students from select area elementary schools for trick-or-treating at the White House on Saturday.

It will be the third straight year of Halloween activity at the presidential mansion, which will be bathed in orange light for the occasion.

The White House says children from the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and from military families also will be among the invited trick-or-treaters. Children from military families will attend a special Halloween party inside the White House.

Obama and first lady Michelle Obama will greet trick-or-treaters and their adult companions on the White House driveway with treat bags containing a box of White House M&Ms; an orange-frosted, White House-shaped butter cookie made by the White House pastry chef; and a serving of dried fruit.

With Tiny Returns, Many Spending More

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER AND CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON — Americans are making a little more money and spending a lot more.

Under normal circumstances, that would be a troubling sign for the economy. But a closer look at some new government figures suggests another possibility: People are saving less money because they're earning next to nothing in interest.

Saving is already difficult because of more expensive gas and food. It's even tougher because of the lower returns — the flip side of super-low interest rates that the Federal Reserve has kept in place since 2008 to help the economy.

Critics say the Fed is punishing those who play by the rules — those careful enough to set aside money for savings or people who built up a nest egg and are living on fixed incomes that depend on interest.

Americans spent 0.6 percent more in Sep-

tember, three times the increase from the previous month, the government said Friday. Spending was especially strong on durable goods — things like cars, appliances and electronics.

At the same time, what they earned was mostly flat. Pay increased 0.3 percent, and overall income just 0.1 percent. After deducting taxes and adjusting for inflation, income fell for a third straight month.

So to make up the difference, many have cut back on savings. The savings rate fell to its lowest level since December 2007, the first month of the recession — and right about the time the Fed started its dramatic series of interest-rate cuts.

Considering how little you can get for parking your money at a bank, it hasn't been a tough choice.

"Consumers have hit a level of saturation in their savings," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst with market research firm The NPD Group. "The propensity is to spend."

The annual yield on six-month certificates of deposit was unchanged this week at 0.23 percent, according to Bankrate.com. Five years

ago, it was 3.62 percent. If you put your money in the six-month CD today, you'd make about enough to buy a burger.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said the trend could mean more spending by Americans. But it will take robust personal spending — along with improvement in the depressed housing market — to get the economy going again.

Ashworth said his firm is not too concerned with the decline in savings because it partly represents "a sharp decline in debt servicing costs." In other words, low interest rates mean it's cheaper to borrow money.

The Fed began cutting interest rates four years ago at the start of the financial crisis. The rate cuts took the federal funds rate, the key for short-term interest rates, from 5.25 percent down to near zero, where they have stayed since December 2008.

The central bank has said it will keep rates super-low into 2013 as long as the economy stays weak. While that means low returns for savers, it is designed to encourage people and businesses to borrow more.



OLIVIER DOULIERY/ABACA PRESS/MCT
Inspired by the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations in New York, dozens of personal tents are set up in Freedom Plaza during the Stop the Machine occupation of the space on Pennsylvania Avenue between the White House and the U.S. Capitol October 28, 2011 in Washington, DC.

Many Cities Deciding To Leave Protesters Alone

BY ERIKA NIEDOWSKI AND MEGHAN BARR
Associated Press

NEW YORK — While more U.S. cities are resorting to force to break up the Wall Street protests, many others — Philadelphia, New York, Minneapolis and Portland, Ore., among them — are content to let the demonstrations go on for now.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, for example, said Friday that the several hundred protesters sleeping in Zuccotti Park, the unofficial headquarters of the movement that began in mid-September, can stay as long as they obey the law.

"I can't talk about other cities," he said. "Our responsibilities are protect your rights and your safety. And I think we're trying to do that. We're trying to act responsibly and safely."

Still, the city made life a lot harder for the demonstrators: Fire inspectors seized a dozen cans of gasoline and six generators that powered lights, cooking equipment and laptops, saying they

were safety hazards.

In the span of three days this week, police broke up protest encampments in Oakland, Calif., Atlanta and, early Friday, San Diego and Nashville, Tenn.

Earlier this week, in the most serious clashes of the movement so far, more than 100 people were arrested and a 24-year-old Iraq War veteran suffered a skull fracture after Oakland police armed with tear gas and bean bag rounds broke up a 15-day encampment and repulsed an effort by demonstrators to retake the site.

But other cities have rejected aggressive tactics, at least so far, some of them because they want to avoid the violence seen in Oakland or, as some have speculated, because they are expecting the protests to wither anyway with the onset of cold weather.

Officials are watching the encampments for health and safety problems but say that protesters exercising their rights to free speech and assembly will be allowed to stay as long as they are peaceful and law-abiding.

Oakland Chief Defends Officers Involved In Clash With Protesters

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Oakland's police chief on Friday defended officers involved in a clash with anti-Wall Street protesters, saying they used what they believed to be the least amount of force possible to protect themselves.

Interim Chief Howard Jordan said he took full responsibility for the actions of his officers, whom protesters accused of injuring an Iraq war veteran during the clash

Tuesday night. Scott Olsen, 24, remained hospitalized in fair condition with a fractured skull after police fired an object that struck him in the head, fellow veterans said.

Jordan's comments came amid continued protests in large cities across California, including in Oakland where many re-established camp outside city hall despite police attempts at dismantling it.

Storm Could Dump 10 Inches Of Snow In New England

BY PAT EATON-ROBB
Associated Press

HEBRON, Conn. — Steve Hoffman had expected to sell a lot of fall fertilizer this weekend at his hardware store in Hebron but instead spent Friday moving bags of ice melting pellets.

A storm moving up the East Coast was expected to combine with a cold air mass and dump anywhere from a dusting of snow to about 10 inches Saturday in parts of the Northeast.

"We're stocked up and we've already sold a few shovels," Hoffman said. "We actually had one guy come in and buy a roof rake."

National Weather Service meteorologist Bill Simpson said the rake probably won't be needed, but October snowfall records could be broken in parts of southern New England, especially at higher elevations. The October

record for southern New England is 7.5 inches in Worcester in 1979.

The most snow will likely hit the Massachusetts Berkshires, the Litchfield Hills in northwestern Connecticut, southwestern New Hampshire and the southern Green Mountains. Connecticut Gov. Dannel P. Malloy warned residents that they could lose power.

The storm could bring more than 6 inches of snow to parts of Maine beginning Saturday night. Parts of southern Vermont could receive more than a foot of wet snow Saturday into Sunday.

In Pennsylvania, 6 to 10 inches could fall at higher elevations, including the Laurel Highlands in the southwestern part of the state and the Pocono Mountains in the northeastern part. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh could see a coating.

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