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Representatives of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet attend a press conference on the Nobel Peace Prize on Oct. 9 in Tunis, Tunisia. The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet won the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its decisive contribution to the building of a pluralistic democracy in Tunisia, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced.

Nobel Peace Prize Boosts Struggling Tunisian Democracy

BY PAUL SCHEMM
Associated Press

TUNIS, Tunisia — It was the fall of 2013 and Tunisia's newfound democracy was in grave danger. The assassination of a left-wing politician had prompted the opposition to walk out of the constitutional assembly. The government was paralyzed, the constitution unfinished and the country on the brink of war.

In nearby Egypt, which had followed Tunisia in a democratic revolution, a coup had just overthrown the Islamist government, and some sectors in Tunisia wanted to follow suit.

Then four civil society groups — the main labor union, the bar association, the employers' association and the human rights league — stepped into the fray. Working together, they got the Islamists to agree to resign in favor of a caretaker government that would organize new elections, while the angry opposition returned to the table to complete the country's constitution.

On Friday, that coalition — the National Dialogue Quartet — received the Nobel Peace Prize for its patient negotiating efforts, which carried Tunisia through an extended constitutional crisis and laid the groundwork for the only democracy that remains following the 2011 Arab Spring demonstrations.

The prize comes at an important time, as Tunisia faces a new crisis that is nearly as critical as the one it confronted in the fall of 2013: A pair of attacks against tourists earlier this year left more than 60 people dead, provoking fear and devastating Tunisia's vital tourism sector, even as the faltering economy dragged support for the democratic process to historic lows.

The Nobel award also draws international attention to a region that is increasingly known more for the harrowing actions of the Islamic State group than the kind of compromise and negotiations that have allowed Tunisia to succeed.

The quartet was a long shot for the prize and none were more surprised than its actual members. Houcine Abbassi, the head of the labor union and the driving force in the 2013 negotiations, learned about the win from an *Associated Press* journalist.

"I am overwhelmed by this," he said, recalling how the country had been on the brink of war. "It's a prize that crowns more than two years of efforts deployed by the quartet when the country was in danger on all fronts."

For months, Abbassi and his colleagues tried to convince the Islamist-led government and the opposition to sit down together and agree on a new government of technocrats to end the crisis.

Several times talks broke down but Abbassi never seemed to lose faith. In November 2013, after another walkout by the parties, he said "we do not believe in failure because the dialogue has to succeed — it is our destiny."

In the end, despite acrimonious negotiations, the two sides agreed on a caretaker prime minister and government. Elsewhere in the region, war raged on in Syria, militias battled each other in Libya as politicians looked on helplessly and thousands were jailed in Egypt.

"(The quartet) established an alternative, peaceful political process at a time when the country was on the brink of civil war," the Nobel Prize committee said in its citation.

In region known for violence and a belief in zero-sum power games, the quartet's achievement in Tunisia stood out as a key Middle East exception, said Mohammed Fadhel Mafoudh, the head of the Bar Association that participated in the negotiations.

"It's a message to all parties present in certain political conflicts, to tell them that everything can be settled with dialogue and all can be settled in a climate of peace. And that the language of weapons leads us nowhere," he said.

The chairwoman of the Nobel committee, Kaci Kullmann Five, said the selection of Tunisia was made with a regional context in mind: "These are different countries but some of the main root causes of social upheaval often resemble each other."

William Lawrence, the director of Middle East and North Africa for the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy, said the prize shows the world that the democratic process is alive in Tunisia despite the twin threats of economic crisis and terrorist attacks.

"Tunisia proves that democracy is

possible in the Arab world," he said. "The international community now needs to step up and support the Tunisian government and the Tunisian people."

Growth in 2015 for Tunisia is expected to be flat or negative while unemployment is over 15 percent and inflation has been running around 6 percent.

Lawrence's organization estimates that the country needs some \$5 billion in aid over the next few years to support an economy brought to its knees by attacks and has called for at least \$800 million in aid from the U.S.

President Barack Obama had originally earmarked \$134 million for Tunisia in 2015 but the Senate cut that by \$50 million, though it could still be restored in conference.

Obama praised the Nobel winners on behalf of the American people.

"This brave coalition of workers, industry, lawyers and human rights advocates is an inspiring reminder that lasting peace and security can only be achieved when citizens are empowered to forge their own future and that democracy is both possible and necessary in the North Africa and the Middle East," Obama said in a statement.

Tunisia's revolution was sparked by the self-immolation of a young itinerant fruit seller after he was harassed by police and occurred against a backdrop of high unemployment and economic troubles that have yet to be solved by the new elected governments.

Many Tunisians complain that the revolution and democracy has brought them little improvements despite an increased freedom of expression, and young people in particular stayed away from the last election in droves.

Despite its small size, Tunisia provides the most foreign recruits to the armies of the Islamic State group, with estimates of more than 3,000 having left to fight in Syria, Iraq and Libya.

"Everyone in this country feels a heavy sense of negativity on the streets, it's very common to hear things were better before the revolution," said Monica Marks, a research fellow for the European Council on Foreign Relations. "Having an injection of positivity — a congratulations from the international community — is a really good thing."

Pentagon Abandons Anti-IS Rebel Force

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is overhauling its approach to fighting the Islamic State in Syria, abandoning a failed Pentagon effort to build a new ground force of moderate rebels and instead partnering with established rebel groups, officials said Friday.

The shift, telegraphed weeks ago by disclosures that the effort had produced only a handful of trained rebels, is meant partly to take better advantage of U.S. airpower, which can play a bigger role now that Turkey is permitting American fighter jets to operate from its soil. But it is not expected to immediately give new momentum to a slow-moving — some would say stalled — American-led campaign against the Islamic State.

The aim is to work with established rebel units "so that over time they can make a concerted push into territory still controlled by ISIL," said Pentagon press secretary Peter Cook. Others said the hope is to put much more pressure on the northern city of Raqqa, the Islamic State's declared capital.

The change also reflects growing concern in the Obama administration that Russia's intervention has complicated the Syrian battlefield and given new life to President Bashar Assad. Russian airstrikes have raised questions about whether and how the U.S. would protect rebel groups it is working with if they are hit by Russian bombs.

Meanwhile, the CIA has since 2013 trained some 10,000 rebels to fight Assad's forces. Those groups have made significant progress against strongholds of the Alawites, Assad's sect, but are now under Russian bombardment. The covert CIA program is the only way the U.S. is taking on Assad militarily.

GOP In Search Of A Leader In Congress

WASHINGTON (AP) — The GOP is a party in chaos, desperately in search of a leader.

In the unruly U.S. House, Republicans enjoy a near-historic majority, yet deep divisions between ultra-conservatives and more traditional GOP lawmakers have left them at a loss over who should be in charge. In the Republican presidential primary, experienced governors and senators — long the party's national leaders-in-waiting — are overshadowed by outsiders like Donald Trump who only seem to get stronger as they challenge the GOP establishment.

Trump even claimed he helped push California Rep. Kevin McCarthy out of the race for House speaker this week, a shocking pullback by a lawmaker seen as the heir apparent.

"They're giving me a lot of credit for that, because I said you really need somebody very, very tough," said Trump, the brash billionaire who has led GOP primary polls throughout the summer and fall.

McCarthy was felled by the same factors that led current Speaker John Boehner to announce his resignation: a rebellion among members sent to Washington by voters who believe the party has compromised far too often with President Barack Obama and congressional Democrats.

Israel Struggles To Contain Violence

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Unrest that erupted several weeks ago at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site spread Friday to Gaza in the form of deadly border clashes with Palestinian protesters, as Israeli security forces struggled to contain a wave of Palestinian stabbing attacks against civilians and soldiers.

For the first time since the current violence began, clashes broke out along the Gaza border after Palestinians in the territory ruled by the Islamic militant group Hamas rolled burning tires and threw rocks at Israeli troops on the frontier. Six Palestinians were killed and a dozen were wounded, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

The Israeli military said "More than a thousand rioters infiltrated the buffer zone engaging the forces at the security fence. Rioters reached the security fence, hurled a grenade and rocks and rolled burning tires at Israeli forces ... threatening to breach the fence and storm the adjacent communities." It said troops fired warning shots and then fired at main instigators to prevent their advance.

Recent days have seen a series of attacks by young Palestinians wielding household items like kitchen knives, screwdrivers and even a vegetable peeler. The youths had no known links to armed groups who have targeted Israeli soldiers and civilians at random, complicating security efforts.

The violence, including the first apparent revenge attack by an Israeli, raised fears of the unrest spiraling further out of control.

1 Student Killed, 3 Wounded At Arizona

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — An overnight brawl between two groups of students escalated into violence Friday when a freshman at Northern Arizona University opened fire on four fraternity members, killing one and wounding three.

Steven Jones, an 18-year-old fraternity pledge, told police he shot the group of students only after they hit him in the face and chased him, according to court documents. He also said he tried to administer first aid to one of the victims.

Prosecutors said the suspect's account amounted to a "self-serving" statement and alleged Jones was the aggressor.

"There is no indication of self-defense here," Deputy County Attorney Ammon Barker said. "The defendant had retreated from the fight, he obtained a gun and then he went back into the fray."

The shooting occurred in a parking lot just outside Mountain View Hall dormitory on the Flagstaff campus, which provides housing for many of the campus' sororities and fraternities. The victims were all members of the Delta Chi fraternity while Jones was a pledge at Sigma Chi. It's not clear why the fight started.

1 Fatally Shot At Texas Southern University Housing Complex

BY MICHAEL GRACZYK
Associated Press

HOUSTON — A student was killed and another person was wounded during a shooting outside of Texas Southern University student-housing complex on Friday, and police have detained two men for questioning, authorities said.

The university quickly went on lockdown after the shooting was reported around 11:30 a.m. in a parking lot at the University Courtyard Apartments, a university-owned complex on the edge of the Houston campus. Students and teachers were told to stay inside until the lockdown was lifted Friday afternoon after the two men were detained, but police said no arrests have been made.

The incident marked the third shooting on or near the campus in less than a week, though it's unclear whether the shootings were related. Friday's shootings also came the same day as a fatal shooting at Northern Arizona University, and about a week after eight students and a teacher were fatally shot at a community college in Oregon.

"Like President Obama says, this is getting to be too regular," Texas Southern President John Rudley said during a Friday afternoon news conference.

Rudley said the Texas Southern student who was killed was a freshman, though his name and age haven't been released. The second victim, whose name also hasn't been released,



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Map locator of Texas Southern University where a shooting leaves one dead.

was shot twice and is hospitalized in stable condition, Houston police spokeswoman Jodi Silva said.

Rudley urged the school's roughly 9,700 students to be more vigilant, noting that "we're in the inner city. Crime is all around us." He also criticized what he said was a culture among some students who believe they shouldn't snitch on each other.

Silva said police were still searching for a third man and were trying to determine a motive in the shooting.

She wouldn't say whether police believed the suspected shooter was in custody. She noted that police aren't treating the case as an "active shooter" investigation, in part because witnesses said the shooter wasn't moving from place to place and fled the scene after the shooting.

The fatal shooting came just hours after another shooting near the same student-housing complex injured one person; in response to the pre-dawn shooting, the university said it would increase police on campus. On Tuesday, university police said a shooting after a poetry slam on campus injured another man.

"My main concern is what they're going to do now," Daijsa Fowls, a 19-year-old pharmacy student from Houston, said as she stood outside the housing complex's gate Friday afternoon. "I'm supposed to be moving on campus and it shakes me up."

Fowls noted that she had a 3-year-old son, and said she wouldn't feel safe walking with him on campus. She said she planned to move into one of the nearby housing units but is now considering transferring to another school.

"A bullet has no name," she said. "It could hit any-

body."

Brittney Solomon, a 19-year-old psychology student from Houston, said she also planned to move to campus.

"I'm most definitely concerned," she said. "It's really nerve-racking feeling that a person here could have a gun."

Classes were cancelled following the lockdown Friday. Rudley said classes will resume Monday.

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