

UN Chief Calls for Protection of Civilians, Aid Workers Caught in Conflict

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday condemned attacks on civilians and aid workers caught up in conflict and called for their protection. Guterres made the appeal on the occasion of World Humanitarian Day, which falls on Aug. 19. "For the millions of people caught in conflict, struggling to find food, water, and safe shelter; who have been driven from their homes with little hope of return; whose schools have been bombed; and who await life-saving medical care, we cannot afford to fail," Guterres told a gathering at UN Headquarters.



The protection of civilians in conflict was difficult to implement. Even worse, more and more humanitarians became a target, and the UN flag was not respected as a symbol of impartiality in the context of those conflicts, he said. The protection of civilians in conflict is a fundamental tenet of international humanitarian law. Yet in war zones all over the world, parties to conflict are flouting their obligations, routinely killing civilians in direct and indiscriminate attacks, and showing contempt for human life, said Guterres, who had worked with the UN humanitarian agency UNHCR for more than 10 years. (Xinhua)

Brexit Boosts EU Popularity

BERLIN - The European Union's popularity amongst its citizens has surged in the wake of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the bloc, a study by policy matters, a German opinion research institute has found. The center-left think tank based in Berlin conducted surveys in eight EU nations between May and June for the report that was commissioned by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The study indicated that concern over the implications of "Brexit" amongst European citizens still persisted

but was outweighed by neutral and positive assessments of the vote's effect. Forty percent of respondents believed that Brexit would weaken the EU, compared to 34 percent who did not expect any consequences, and 16 percent who said that the Union would even be strengthened as a result. According to policy matters, the findings contradict fears that the loss of one of the European Union's major economies could lead to its complete dissolution as citizens of the bloc balk at the related difficulties faced by Britain. (Xinhua)

Trump Fires Key Adviser after White House Stint Marked by in-Fighting

WASHINGTON - White House chief strategist Steve Bannon was fired on Friday from U.S. President Donald Trump's administration, amid months of butting heads with key officials. The move was simply the last straw in a constantly volatile relationship between Bannon on one side and other staff members on the other. Moreover, the hard-right Bannon was seen as a bad influence on a White House bedeviled by controversy. "Bannon's position had become increasingly un-

tenable, as his influence was seen by many ... to be a negative influence for the administration, in terms of stability and messaging, and an impediment to legislative success," Dan Mahaffee, senior vice president and director of policy at the Center for the Study of Congress and the Presidency, told Xinhua. "The controversy surrounding Charlottesville and Bannon's perceived ties to the alt-right only furthered this criticism of Bannon," he added, noting last week's protest of



white power advocates in the U.S. state of Virginia, which ended in the death of a 32-year-old woman. It remains unknown whether this is the start of more house cleaning, or whether the White House's staff roster will retain the same team members going forward. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China, Saudi Arabia Agree to Strengthen Economic Ties

BEIJING - Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli Friday met with Saudi Arabian Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid al-Falih in Beijing, agreeing to advance industrial capacity and investment cooperation. Zhang will visit Saudi Arabia next week and co-chair the second meeting of a high-level steering committee for coordinating bilateral cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. China-Saudi Arabia relations have entered a fast lane of full development, said Zhang. China supports Saudi Arabia's efforts to safeguard stability and security and is willing to implement a list of major cooperative projects in industrial capacity and investment under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, he said. China supports Saudi Arabia to diversify its economy, said Zhang. "I expect to visit Saudi Arabia next week and discuss with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman policy coordination and alignment of development strategies between the two sides," he said. Al-Falih said Saudi Arabia cherishes the traditional friendship with China and is ready to make full use of the high-level steering committee to promote the docking of the Belt and Road Initiative with the "Saudi Vision 2030" growth strategy, so as to bring more benefits to people of the two countries. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Undertaken Operations against Terrorists of all Hue, Color: COAS

RAWALPINDI - Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Friday highlighted the importance Pakistan accords to its relations with US, particularly security cooperation and efforts towards regional stability and said Pakistan has undertaken operations against terrorists of all hue and colour. This, he said, during a meeting with General Joseph L. Votel, Commander United States Central Command (US CENTCOM) along with his delegation which called on the COAS here. Matters of professional interest with special focus on security situation in Afghanistan were discussed, Inter Services Public Relations' press release said. The COAS reiterated his commitment to work in close coordination with Afghan security forces and US-led Resolute Support Mission (RSM) for improved security environment in Pakistan-Afghanistan border region. Referring to Afghanistan and Pakistan-US relations, the COAS said no other country has more interest for peace in Afghanistan than Pakistan. He said more than financial or material assistance, "we seek acknowledgement of our decades long contributions towards regional peace and stability, understanding of our challenges and most importantly the sacrifices Pakistani nation and its security forces have rendered in fight against terrorism and militancy." The US Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale was also present. (Monitoring Desk)

Terrorism in Name of Islam Doesn't Represent Islam: Zarif

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has criticized US President Donald Trump for hastily "insulting" Islam following terrorist attacks in Spain, saying that acts of terror committed in the name of Islam do not represent the holy religion. "Quick to insult Islam but hesitant to condemn racist terror at home. Terror in name of race or religion is plain terror & represents neither," Zarif said in a message posted on his Twitter account on Saturday. Last week, violent clashes erupted between far-right demonstrators and counter-protesters in the US city of Charlottesville. A white supremacist drove a car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing a woman. Trump failed to condemn the far-right agitators for the violence at first, remaining silent for 48 hours before he finally came up with a statement of condemnation that surprisingly denounced all sides. In later remarks, the US president also seemed to compare the far-right protesters with the people who had been rallying to denounce white supremacy and fascism. In contrast, soon after Daesh claimed deadly terrorist attacks in Spain on Thursday, Trump took to Twitter to make anti-Islam remarks. A man holds a Spanish flag with a black ribbon painted on it at an impromptu memorial, a day after a van crashed into pedestrians in Barcelona, Spain, August 18, 2017. (Presstv)

Uzbekistan Foreign Minister to Travel to India for Talks

TASHKENT - The top Uzbek diplomat will embark on a three-day visit to India next week to meet with top officials and attend a series of public events, the Uzbek Foreign Ministry said Saturday. The Uzbek top diplomat plans to hold talks with his Indian counterpart Sushma Swaraj and other dignitaries, and attend the Uzbek-Indian business forum, the ministry said. "On August 21-23, 2017, the Delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulaziz Kamilov will pay an official visit to the Republic of India," the statement read. (Monitoring Desk)

Europe to Stay Vigilance in Fight Against Terrorism



BRUSSELS - On Thursday afternoon, a van mowed down people at the famous street Las Ramblas in Barcelona, Spain. Hours later, a vehicle ran over several people in the Catalan resort town of Cam-

brils, about 100 kilometers southwest of Barcelona. The five alleged terrorists were taken down by Catalan police in a shootout. The number of people killed in Thursday's double terror attacks rose to

15, the Catalan emergency services confirmed. The fact that terrorism is rampant in Europe is a result of a series of internal and external reasons. Experts believe that European countries must stay alert in the fight against terrorism. Europe stays united. The Barcelona attacks were the latest major terrorist attacks happened in Europe this year following London, Paris, Copenhagen and Brussels ones. These deadly attacks made Europe suffer great pains. Leaders from Euro-

pean Union (EU) institutions and member states condemned the attacks, expressed condolences, and stated that Europe would stay united to fight against terrorism. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker lambasted the "cowardly" attack in a statement, saying "I send my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the victims, as well as to (Spanish) Prime Minister Rajoy and the people of Spain. My thoughts are with the people of Barcelona." (Xinhua)

Mattis Again Seeks to Reassure U.S. Allies

WASHINGTON - Defense Secretary Jim Mattis travels to the Middle East and eastern Europe next week to play the increasingly familiar role of reassuring allies that the United States is committed to them despite mixed messages from President Donald Trump. Mattis will visit Jordan, Turkey, and Ukraine to address concerns about the fight against Islamic State and give a message that Washington will not tolerate Russia's annexation of eastern Ukraine. The informal portfolio of soothing traditional U.S. friends upset by Trump's often sharp comments and tweets on foreign policy is one that the retired Marine general is becoming used to. "There is no-one in the administration, maybe with the exception of Vice President Mike Pence, that has to shoulder the responsibility of Trump's rhetoric more than Mattis," said Joshua Walker, a former U.S. diplomat and current fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a think tank. (Reuters)

BRICS Summit to Open New Chapter in Russia-China Regional Cooperation

PETROZAVODSK, Russia - The Republic of Karelia in Russia's northwest and Fujian province in southern China are expected to sign an agreement during the upcoming BRICS summit that could see trade bolster significantly between the two favored jurisdictions, Karelia's top official said. "Currently, the preparation for the establishment of a friendly and cooperative partnership between the two sides has entered the final stage. Hopefully, we will sign the agreement during the BRICS summit and start to carry out joint projects as soon as possible," Artur Parfyonchikov, acting head of the Republic of Karelia, told Xinhua in a recent interview. The Ninth BRICS Summit to be held in early September in Fujian's resort city Xiamen, themed "BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future," will be the first summit among the BRICS members in the second "Golden Decade" of the multilateral organization. Plans for expanding cooperation between Karelia and Fujian are based on their multiple similarities, Parfyonchikov noted. Geographically, both are border regions. Economically, the two regions boast of rich resources in forestry, mining, tourism and other fields, and enjoy similar priorities in their respective country's national economic policy, which guarantees great potential for cooperation, he explained. Joint projects in non-traditional industries including automation machinery, information technology, culture and education are also being explored by the two jurisdictions, he added. (Xinhua)

Russia to Enhance Military Position in Central Asia: Shoigu

MOSCOW - Russia will strengthen its military presence in Central Asia due to the continuously unstable situation in the territory, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Friday. "The situation in Central Asia remains unstable. The armed conflicts between the government troops, Taliban, and ISIS continued in Afghanistan," Shoigu said during a board session of the military department. Noting that the Central Asian area is of great strategic importance, the minister said that Russia's Central Military



District is paying special attention to the implementation of joint actions with the armed forces of Central Asian countries in a bid to strengthen positions of Russia in the region. Joint combat exercises between Russian, Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek armies have been planned for the second half of this year, he added. The Central Military District is one of the four operational strategic commands of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. (Xinhua)

Iran, Turkey Agree to Boost Military Cooperation: Official

TEHRAN - Iran and Turkey agree to forge closer military cooperation following talks in Ankara this week between the Iranian Armed Forces' chief of staff and senior Turkish officials, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman says. "An agreement was reached to hold further high-level visits from now on," Ibrahim Kalin told a news conference on Thursday. "A series of activities will also be held to boost military cooperation," he added. Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri arrived in Turkey on Tuesday at the

head of a high-ranking politico-military delegation. He met with the country's top authorities, including President Erdogan, his Turkish counterpart, General Hulusi Akar, and Defense Minister Nurettin Canikli. It was the first visit by an Iranian chief of staff of the Armed Forces to Turkey after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Kalin described Baqeri's visit as "fruitful and successful" and added that bilateral talks focused on counter-terrorism, the campaign against Daesh Takfiri terrorists, and a joint effort by Iran, Turkey and Russia to stem the fighting in parts of Syria. (Presstv)

Syrian Army, Hezbollah Launch Offensive Against IS near Lebanese Border

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army and the Lebanese Hezbollah group on Saturday morning launched an offensive against the Islamic State (IS) group in the western Qalamoun region, in tandem with an operation by the Lebanese army on the Lebanese side of the borders against IS, a military source told Xinhua. Dubbed "If You Return We Will Return," the operation aims to clear the badlands of the western Qalamoun region in Syria from IS, just a couple of weeks after both allies dislodged the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front from areas in western Qalamoun and the adjacent Juroud Aarsal barrens on the Lebanese side of the border. The cross-border battle was anticipated after the defeat of Nusra in border areas in both Syria and Lebanon. In the last battle against Nusra, the Syrian army and Hezbollah were fighting on the Syrian side of the borders, and other fighters of Hezbollah were fighting on the Lebanese side of the frontier. At the time, the Lebanese army wasn't engaged in the fight but took defensive positions in case of any attempt by the Nusra militants to carry out counter attacks. In this battle against IS, Hezbollah and the Syrian army are fighting in Syria, while the Lebanese army is fighting IS in Lebanon. Lebanese officials said there was no coordination between the Lebanese army and Hezbollah or the Syrian army. (Xinhua)