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'Clerics get lost!': Iran protests rage on over plane disaster



A woman reacts as people hold a vigil for the victims of a Ukrainian passenger jet which crashed in Iran, at Downing Street in London, Britain January 10, 2020. REUTERS/Henry Nicholls TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY

DUBAI (Reuters) - Protesters denouncing Iran's clerical rulers took to the streets and riot police deployed to face them on Monday, in a third day of demonstrations after authorities acknowledged shooting down a passenger plane by accident. Demonstrations in Iran, some met by a violent crackdown, are the latest twist in one of the most serious escalations between Washington and Tehran since Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Video showed students on Monday chanting slogans including "Clerics get lost!" outside universities in the city of Isfahan and in Tehran, where riot police were filmed taking positions on the streets.

Trump: Imminent threat from Soleimani 'doesn't really matter'

U.N. says reports of violence against Iran protesters 'worrying'

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Images from the previous two days of protests showed wounded people being carried and pools of blood on the ground. Gunshots could be heard, although the police denied opening fire.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who raised the stakes last week by ordering a drone strike that killed Iran's most powerful military commander, tweeted to Iran's leaders: "don't kill your protesters."

Tehran has acknowledged shooting down the Ukrainian jetliner by mistake on Wednesday, killing all 176 people aboard, hours after firing at U.S. targets in Iraq to retaliate for the killing on Jan. 3 of General Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad. Iranian public anger, rumbling for days as Iran repeatedly denied it was to blame for the plane crash, erupted into protests on Saturday when the military admitted its role.

A full picture of protests inside Iran is difficult to obtain because of restrictions on independent media. But videos uploaded to the internet showed scores, possibly hundreds, of protesters on Monday at sites in Tehran and Isfahan, a major city south of the capital.

"They killed our elites and replaced them with clerics," they chanted outside a Tehran university, referring to Iranian students returning to studies in Canada who were on the plane. Videos posted late on Sunday recorded the gunfire around protests in Tehran's Azadi Square. Wounded were being carried and men who seemed to be security personnel ran as they gripped rifles. Riot police hit protesters with batons as people shouted "Don't beat them!"

"Death to the dictator," other footage showed protesters shouting, directing their fury directly at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader since 1989.

Reuters could not immediately verify the footage. State-affiliated media has reported the protests in Tehran and other cities

but without all the details from the uploaded videos.

"At protests, police absolutely did not shoot because the capital's police officers have been given orders to show restraint," Tehran police chief Hossein Rahimi said in a statement on state media

Tehran's showdown with Washington has come at a precarious time for the authorities in Iran and the proxy forces they support to wield influence across the Middle East. Sanctions imposed by Trump have hammered the Iranian economy. Iran's authorities killed hundreds of protesters in November in what appears to have been the bloodiest crackdown on anti-government unrest since 1979. In Iraq and Lebanon, governments backed by pro-Iran armed groups have also faced mass protests.

The deaths of the passengers, including many Iranians, some with dual citizenship, adds trauma to a nation still raw from the deaths in November's unrest, when police fired on protesters who torched shops, petrol stations and banks. Soleimani's killing led to days of mourning and public shows of solidarity with the authorities, but even that turned bloody, with at least 56 people trampled to death at his funeral.

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Separatists will 'stink for 10,000 years', China says after Taiwan vote

BEIJING (Reuters) - Separatists will "leave a stink for 10,000 years", the Chinese government's top diplomat said on Monday, in Beijing's most strongly worded reaction yet to Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's re-election on the back of a message of standing up to Beijing.

FILE PHOTO: China's top diplomat State Councillor Wang Yi waves during a meeting with Russia's President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia April 5, 2018. Alexander Zemlianichenko/Pool via REUTERS/File Photo

Tsai was returned to office on Saturday by a landslide, in an election dominated by China's growing efforts to get the island it claims as its own to accept Beijing's rule.

Tsai said upon claiming victory that Taiwan would not give in to threats and intimidation from China and that only Taiwan's people had the right to decide their own future.

Speaking in Africa, Chinese State Councillor Wang Yi said the "one China" principle that recognizes Taiwan as being part of China had long since become the common consensus of the international community.

"This consensus won't alter a bit because of a local election on Taiwan, and will not be shaken because of the wrong words and actions of certain Western politicians," Wang added, in an apparent reference to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

In congratulating Tsai, Pompeo had praised her for seeking stability with China "in the face of unrelenting pressure".

Wang, in comments carried by China's Foreign Ministry, said "reunification across the Taiwan Strait is a historical inevitability".

"Those who split the country will be doomed to leave a stink for 10,000 years," said Wang, one of whose previous roles was head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, using an expression that means to go down in history as a byword for infamy.

China passed an anti-secession law in 2005 which authorizes the use of force against Taiwan if China judges it to have seceded. Taiwan says it is already an independent country called the Republic of China, its official name.



FILE PHOTO: China's top diplomat State Councillor Wang Yi waves during a meeting with Russia's President Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia April 5, 2018. Alexander Zemlianichenko/Pool via REUTERS/File Photo

Responding to Wang's remarks, Taiwan's government said the island had never been part of the People's Republic of China and called on Beijing to respect the outcome of the election.

Wang "must face up to reality and stop believing his own lies", Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said.

China has been particularly angry by

increased U.S. support for Taiwan. Washington has no formal ties with Taipei, but is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself.

Meeting Tsai in Taipei on Sunday, the de facto U.S. ambassador in Taiwan, Brent Christensen, commended voters for taking part in "this sacred democratic process".

"This election serves as a reminder that the United States and Taiwan are not just partners; we are members of the same community of democracies, bonded by our shared values," he said, in comments released by the American Institute in Taiwan.

However the potential for renewed tension with China failed to rattle Taiwan's stock market, which closed up 0.74%.



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Editor's Choice



William Shakespeare's First Folio is displayed at Christie's Auction House London, Britain, January 13, 2020. The book, which was published in 1623 and contains 36 of Shakespeare's plays, is expected to sell for \$4,000,000-\$6,000,000 when it goes on auction in New York.



People participate in the annual "No Pants Subway Ride" in New York City, U.S., January 12, 2020. REUTERS/Brendan McDermid TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



Democratic U.S. presidential candidate Senator Bernie Sanders hosts a climate rally in Iowa City



People jump between trains, who has come to attend at the final prayer of Bishwa Ijtema, which is considered the world's second-largest Muslim gathering after Haj, in Tongi



Paul Christandro poses for a picture inside of Notre Dame de l'Assomption Cathedral (Our Lady of the Assumption), destroyed in 2010 earthquake, in Port-au-Prince



Soccer Football - Ligue 1 - Paris St Germain vs AS Monaco - Parc des Princes, Paris, France - January 12, 2020 Paris St Germain's Neymar celebrates scoring their first goal REUTERS/Gonzalo Fuentes TPX IMAGES OF THE DAY



The statue of Andrew Jackson is silhouetted in Lafayette Park in Washington



Pope Francis baptises a baby during a Mass in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican

The flu season is off and running in the Deep South.

The most recent weekly flu report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finds high levels of flu-like illness in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina and Texas.

The highest level in that report for the week ended Nov. 16 was in Mississippi. Doctors in the Magnolia State say they're already seeing lots of patients.

Dr. Darren Scoggin of Children's Medical Group in Jackson tells WLBT-TV that travel and family gatherings can help contribute to the flu's spread.

CDC officials say it's not too late to get vaccinated. They say the flu vaccine is the best way to prevent flu and its complications.

So far in the 2019-2020 flu season, CDC has reported four flu-associated deaths among children. (Courtesy WLBT-TV, http://www.wlbt.com)



Related CDC Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report

According to this week's FluView report, seasonal influenza activity in the United States continues to increase but the amount of activity and the predominant influenza virus varies by region.

Viruses Clinical Lab 8.0% of respiratory specimens tested by clinical laboratories were positive for influenza viruses. This is higher than the previous week.

Public Health Lab Nationally, B/Victoria viruses are most common followed by A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) viruses. The predominant virus varies by region and age group.

Illness Outpatient Illness: ILINet

The 2019-2020 Flu Season Is Off And Running In The Deep South, With The Worst Levels Reported In Mississippi

Flu Season Takes Off Quickly In Deep South States



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

2.9% of visits to health care providers were for influenza-like illness (ILI). ILI has been at or above the national baseline of 2.4% for three weeks.

Outpatient Illness: ILI Activity Map



The number of jurisdictions experiencing high ILI activity remained at 8 this week. In addition, 7 jurisdictions had moderate activity compared to 0 last week.

Geographic Spread



The number of jurisdictions reporting regional or widespread activity increased from 15 last week to 24 this week.

The number of jurisdictions experiencing high ILI activity remained at 8 this week. In addition, 7 jurisdictions had moderate activity compared to 0 last week.

Geographic Spread The number of jurisdictions reporting regional or widespread activity increased from 15 last week to 24 this week.

Severe Disease Hospitalizations The overall hospitalization rate for the season is 2.0 per 100,000. This is similar to what has been seen at this time during other recent seasons.

P&I Mortality 5.1% of deaths were attributed to pneumonia and influenza (P&I). This is below the epidemic threshold of 6.3%.

Pediatric Deaths One new influenza-associated pediatric death occurring during the 2019-2020 season was reported to CDC this week. The total for the season is 5.

A description of the CDC influenza surveillance system, including methodology and detailed descriptions of each data component is available on the surveillance methods page.



Additional information on the current and previous influenza seasons for each surveillance component are available on FluView Interactive. (Courtesy https://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/#PublicHealthLaboratories)

Key Points •Nationally, ILI activity has been at or above baseline for three weeks; however, the amount of influenza activity across the country varies with the south and parts of the west seeing elevated activity while other parts of the country are still seeing low activity.

•There is significant cocirculation of influenza B/Victoria, A(H1N1)pdm09, and

A(H3N2) viruses with the predominant virus varying by region and age group. •The flu season is just getting started. It's not too late to get vaccinated. Flu vaccination is always the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications. (Courtesy https://www.cdc.gov/)



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Texas Becomes First State To Officially Refuse Refugees



Texas Gov. Greg Abbott speaks with President Trump. (Photo/AFP via Getty Images)

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

HOUSTON (AP) — Texas will no longer accept the resettlement of new refugees, becoming the first state known to do so under a recent Trump administration order, Governor Greg Abbott said Friday. Abbott is the first governor to take President Trump up on his executive order allowing state and local governments to block refugee resettlements. Other Republican governors have publicly welcomed refugees. In 2019, Texas received more refugees than any other state. Abbott's announcement could have major implications for refugees coming to the United States. Texas has large refugee populations in several of its cities and has long been a leader in settling refugees, taking in more than any other state during the 2018 governmental fiscal year, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Since the 2002 fiscal year, Texas has resettled an estimated 88,300 refugees, second only to California, according to the Pew Research Center. In a letter released last Friday, Abbott wrote that Texas "has been left by Congress to deal with disproportionate mi-

gration issues resulting from a broken federal immigration system." He added that Texas has done "more than its share."



Abbott argued that the state and its non-profit organizations should instead focus on "those who are already here, including refugees, migrants, and the homeless — indeed, all Texans." It wasn't clear how Abbott's letter might affect any currently pending refugee cases. Refugee groups sharply criticized the Republican governor. Ali Al Sudani, chief programs officer of Interfaith Min-

istries for Greater Houston, predicted that some refugees with longstanding plans to come to Texas would have flights rescheduled or delayed. Al Sudani settled in Houston from Iraq in 2009 and now works to resettle other refugees. "You can imagine the message that this decision will send to them and to their families," Al Sudani said. "It's very disappointing and very sad news, and honestly, this is not the Texas that I know." Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins said he had met refugees in Dallas who had previously served as interpreters or aides for U.S. soldiers. "You have people who are fleeing violence, people who are assisting us in the war on terror, who are having the door slammed in their faces," said Jenkins, a Democrat who is the county's chief administrative official.



President Donald Trump announced in September that resettlement agencies must get written consent from state and local officials in any jurisdiction where they want to help resettle refugees beyond June 2020. Trump has already slashed the number of refugees allowed into the country for the 2020 fiscal year to a historic low of 18,000. About 30,000 refugees were resettled in the U.S. during the previous fiscal year. Governors in 42 other states have said they will consent to allowing in more refugees, according to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, which works with local agencies throughout the U.S. to resettle refugees. The governors who haven't chimed in are all Republicans and are from Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and

Wyoming.



In this Aug. 7, 2019 file photo, President Donald Trump and Melania Trump greet Texas Gov. Greg Abbott after arriving in El Paso, Texas. Abbott says the state will reject the re-settlement of new refugees, becoming the first state known to do so under a recent Trump administration order. In a letter released Friday, Jan. 10, 2020, Abbott wrote that Texas "has been left by Congress to deal with disproportionate migration issues resulting from a broken federal immigration system." He added that Texas, which typically takes in thousands of refugees each year, has done "more than its share." Governors in 42 other states have said they will consent to allowing in more refugees, according to the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. (Photo/The El Paso Times via AP).

Related Republican governors reject Trump's offer to ban refugees

States' announcements on continuing to accept refugees



Data: Axios compilation of news reports, press releases and public state-

ments. Chart will be updated as states announce their decisions. (Cartogram: Andrew Witherspoon/Axios)

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott is the only Republican governor so far to stop accepting refugees following President Trump's executive order that allows state and local governments to block refugee resettlements. While Republicans widely support Trump's restrictive immigration policies, local and state officials in many states have been unwilling to push out those who have been forced from their homes and gone through stringent vetting processes required to become a U.S. refugee.



Republican governors of Tennessee, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Nebraska along with others have written letters to the U.S. State Department or publicly announced they will continue accepting refugee resettlements, representing some of the reddest states in the country. Abbott has previously withdrawn Texas from the national refugee resettlement program and sued for the right to block Syrian refugees from settling in the state, the Texas Tribune reports. Meanwhile, Austin Mayor Steve Adler and Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price both called on Abbott to continue allowing refugees to settle in Texas. Both Tennessee and North Dakota have also sued for the right to refuse refugee settlements, but have now both said they plan to continue accepting refugees. (Courtesy axios.com)



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