

UN General Assembly meets to discuss global issues

by Setareh Raygani
Web Editor

On Sept. 23, all eyes were fixed on the United Nations headquarters in New York City as dignitaries and envoys gathered for one of the most pivotal UN General Assembly meetings in recent years. Leaders from 193 member states from Paraguay to Nigeria convened to discuss international matters of the utmost importance.

President Obama addressed the assembly first by acknowledging that the US has limited power in determining the events that occur inside other nations. Obama clearly went over what he wanted to do during his term, and it was no surprise that Iran was at the top of his agenda.

After the election of Hassan Rouhani, a more moderate president, Iran has shown many positive signs of opening up negotiations with the US. On Iran, President Obama was quick to note that the hostilities between Iran and the United States will not be easy to overcome. Even so, Obama stated that the US will give Iran another chance and that a "diplomatic path must be tested."

Rouhani, in his own speech, also spoke of peace and tolerance



INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION: UN officials meet to negotiate and discuss controversial topics.

and repeatedly declared that Iran has no room for nuclear weapons and that the weapons are against the morals of the Iranian people. Obama took pains to defend his threat of military action against Syria's use of chemical weapons; he also condemned the Assad regime for its corrupt government system. Later, Obama called on Iran and Russia to accept the reality that the Assad regime cannot be left to stand thus concluding that the continuing war will increase the violence of the extremists.

European Union President Herman van Rumpay spoke strongly regarding the crimes in Syria, "We cannot let this spiral of criminal, sectarian violence pursue its dreadful course at the heart of the world's most unstable region. What will the situation be when we meet again next year?" In response, nearly two dozen member states became signatories to the Arms Trade Treaty, which, upon going into effect, will regulate international weapons trade. The general assembly has had a successful meeting in addressing all the problems that are present in the world; now it is time for the nations to put their plans into action.

(Sources: New York Times and UN News Centre)

Pope Francis makes major steps in Catholic Church

by Liat Rubin
Sports Editor

Recently appointed Pope Francis is making major shockwaves in the Roman Catholic Church with his comments on gay priests as well as gay and lesbian Catholics.

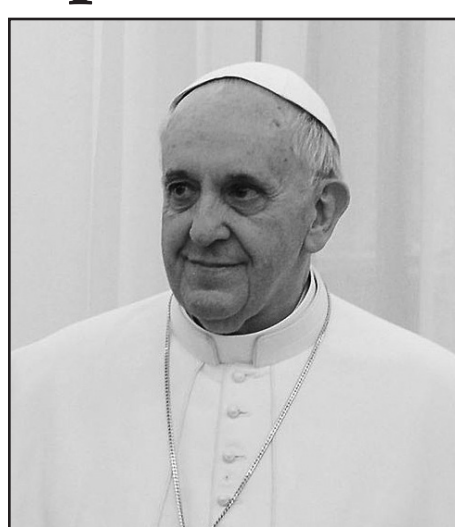
Only six months into his papacy, Francis has made



CHANGE: Francis questions the Church's stance on gay marriage.

a major step in the Catholic Church's approach to the issue of homosexuality. On July 29, while returning from a massive event in Brazil, Francis answered a number of questions regarding his view on the gay members of the Catholic church. During the interview, the Pope said, "Who am I to judge a gay person of goodwill who seeks the Lord? You can't marginalize these people." Francis is not necessarily taking a stand in support of gay marriage, but he is stating that the church should not be so concerned with the sexual orientation of its members and its priests. This contrasts greatly with the views of the past pope, Benedict XVI who formally barred men who the Vatican deemed to have "deep-seated" homosexuality from entering the priesthood.

More recently on Sept. 19, Pope Francis participated in an interview in which he detailed his past comments on gay involvement with the Catholic Church. Overall, his attitude was largely as it was perceived before: unconcerned with a worshiper's



FAITH: Francis stresses the importance of love and faith above all.

sexual orientation and only concerned with accepting them for their faith in god. He elaborated upon his views by saying that the Church has become "obsessed with abortion, gay marriage and contraception." He believes that the over-concentration on the controversial subjects is taking away from the true meaning of the Catholic Church as a place for those who worship and love God.

Francis went further by criticizing the church for putting dogma before love, and "for prioritizing moral doctrines over serving the poor and marginalized. He articulated his vision of an inclusive church, a "home for all."

Francis is also quoted comparing the Catholic Church to a field hospital after battle. He said "It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars. You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else."

(Sources: Huffington Post, New York Times)

Angela Merkel re-elected

by Michelle Huang
Web Editor

Amidst deafening cheers of "Angie! Angie! Angie!" a beaming, middle-aged woman stepped up to accept the position of German chancellor for her third consecutive term.

Angela Merkel shocked the world in 2005 when she was appointed chancellor for the very first time. Although this was a position that had never before been held by a woman, that was not the most unique attribute of this new German chancellor. Merkel grew up behind the Berlin wall and entered politics only after its fall, becoming the first eastern German to lead the reunited country.

In 2005, Merkel stepped into the position amidst doubt and uncertainty. A genuinely new face in politics, Merkel struggled to secure the trust of her countrymen. Eight years later, the victorious scene

is completely contrasting. A savvy, revered Merkel won the office with a staggering 41.5% of the vote, the closest her party has ever gotten to an absolute majority.

This dramatic shift in attitude occurred in the wake of several historic events. Following the Great Recession of 2009 that started in America and spiraled out to affect the global economy, many European leaders staggered under the pressure and fell from favor. Economic prosperity continued to plummet during the Eurozone crisis, placing further blame upon the heads of the countries. Merkel is unique in that she is the only leader in the Eurozone to be re-elected following the financial hardships, reflecting the grace with which she steered the German economy to a softer crash through severe austerity measures.

Going forward, Merkel's biggest challenge will be finding a new coalition partner to assume a majority. Merkel's main party, the Christian Democratic Union, did well. However, the CDU's sister party, the Free Democrats, suffered a huge dip in favor during the election and fell just short of the five percent threshold to secure a seat in Parliament. Without a majority, Merkel will have a more difficult time pushing her agenda in Parliament. Therefore, the CDU is looking toward the Social Democratic Party as a potential ally.

In the precarious world of Eurozone government, Merkel is fortunate that her largest worry is simply finding a coalition partner. Many neighboring countries are struggling to keep their head above the water and keep their industries afloat. Merkel's re-election suggests that Germany will remain one of the world's strongest economies without being an actual superpower, the preference of many citizens. Although prominent analysts expressed concerns over Merkel's iconic third term, the German voters rewarded the woman who kept bread on their tables and a roof over their families by placing her at the head of their country once more. (Sources: The Guardian, New York Times)



all photos courtesy wikicommons
CHANCELLOR: Merkel is the first woman to be German Chancellor.

Syrian civil war escalates

by Aidan Adams-Campeau
Humor Editor

In the aftermath of the horrific chemical weapon attack on Aug. 21 that left over 1,400 Syrian citizens dead, President Bashar al-Assad has agreed to a plan to relinquish and ultimately destroy his chemical weapons reserves, easing some diplomatic tension and making Western military intervention seem, at the moment, unlikely. Though Assad claims that the rebels were responsible for this attack, the US has firmly asserted that the Assad regime used chemical weapons on its own citizens. On Sept. 14, Syria agreed to join the Chemical Weapons Convention, a treaty which bans the use of chemical weapons such as sarin, the nerve gas allegedly used by the Syrian government in the recent attack.



CRUMBLING TO THE GROUND: Buildings deteriorate and waste away.

Syria met this first deadline and has now admitted to possessing large stockpiles of chemical weapons. Diplomatic means have been successful up to this point, largely due to the stances of China and Russia in defense of Syria. However, Russian Chief of Staff Sergei Ivanov stated that "if we became sure that Assad is cheating, we could change our position." This statement underscores the trepidation surrounding the situation in Syria, as the US still appears to be considering military action should diplomatic talks fail.

In an interview on Sept. 23, Bashar al-Assad gave assurance of his desire to cooperate with efforts to destroy Syrian chemical weapons. Speaking about Syria's new commitments in the wake of the international agreements, Assad said that "[Syria] will honor everything that we have agreed to do." However, he also criticized the US, France, and Britain for their desire "to appear victorious in their battles against an imaginary enemy, which they assume is Syria."

The situation in Syria is still uncertain, but recent events since the chemical attack have seemed to avert the course of the United States from military intervention in favor of diplomacy. This diplomacy, however, relies heavily on Syrian compliance with plans to destroy their chemical weapons. (Sources: LA Times, Reuters, The Guardian, ABC News)



RAGING FLAMES: Buildings burn in Syria as the war continues.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met in Geneva to draft a plan to remove and destroy Syria's chemical weapons. The plan includes a timetable which aims to have the weapons destroyed by mid-2014. The plan also requires the Syrian government to reveal information regarding the types and amounts of chemical weapons in their possession to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons by Sept. 21.