

Sochi increases security in response to terrorist attacks

by Hyuntae Byun
News Editor

The security for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics has been increased following last month's twin bombings in the nearby city of Volgograd, which is a mere 400 miles from Sochi. The bombings occurred on Dec. 29 and 30 and targeted a rail station and a bus, resulting in a total of 34 deaths and dozens of injuries. While no organization has yet taken responsibility for the twin bombings, it is largely believed that Chechen separatist groups are responsible. Such separatist groups are the result of a 20-year war over Chechnya, which today is a federal subject of Russia.

US national security analysts say that the risk of a terrorist attack at this year's Olympics is high, with some even advising not to attend. In order to curb fears of another terrorist attack, Russian authorities recently mobilized tens of thousands of troops and formed a 1,500 mile security perimeter around Sochi. Despite these efforts, US officials say that maintaining security is difficult, as Sochi's underdeveloped infrastructure poses a significant risk.

Officials say that a car bombing or even a vehicular accident could make response and detours difficult due to Sochi's lack of a unified



TREPIDATION: In an effort to curtail possible attacks, officials have revamped security.

road system. In addition, Sochi's mountainous geography makes its roads difficult to navigate and also funnel into many choke points for traffic, which could provide prime targets for attacks. Finally, all eleven hospitals in the Sochi region are difficult to access rapidly, as they are all on routes that are difficult to navigate.

The newly created 1,500 mile security perimeter forms a large special exclusion zone, meaning that only Sochi-marked vehicles or security and emergency cars will be allowed to enter the wider Sochi area. In addition, the Russian government is enforcing a restriction on air and sea traffic, which includes heavy security and identification checks on all individuals entering the zone.

The groups held accountable for the Volgograd attacks largely operate in the Northern Caucasus region, while Sochi is situated in the adjacent Southern Caucasus region. Despite this proximity, experts and security analysts fear that possible attacks may be situated on "soft targets," rather than Sochi itself. Experts warn that while Sochi itself may be secure, things like hotels, train stations, and major public squares in the Greater Sochi area are more vulnerable.

(Sources: CNN, Washington Times)

Syrian rebel infighting escalates and causes 697 deaths

by Kelsey Fleming
World Editor

From Jan. 3 to Jan. 12, tumultuous fighting between al Qaeda affiliates and Islamist rebel groups led to the slaughter of 697 Syrian people living in the volatile neighborhoods of northern Syria. Of these casualties, 351 were combatants of Islamist and non-Islamist rebel battalions, 246 were Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) fighters, and 100 were civilians. According to the United Nations, over 130,000 people have perished in the Syrian civil war so far, prompting many countries in the international community to take action and devise a plan for peace.

After nine days of blood-curdling gunfire, bodies littered the streets and buildings lay in ruins and shambles. In what is now called the worst bout of infighting since the Syrian civil war began, the rebel clash has chipped away at the opposition movement and called into question the united strength of those fighting the government.

Despite the horror and destruction of the nine-day carnage, infighting has continued in these opposition-held provinces. Al Qaeda and Islamist rebel groups have alienated factions in the territory and exercised violence. By kidnapping and torturing opponents, rebel fighters of the opposition groups hope to gain the upper-hand and assert their power

and dominance over the region.

Devastating bloodshed has not only stained the streets of Syria, it has ravaged the homes and livelihoods of Syrian men, women, and children. Venturing into abandoned buildings and forgotten homes, Italian photographer Matteo Rovella has spent the past three years capturing images of the cataclysmic damage and chaos. In an interview with CNN, he stated, "It's something like still-life photography, but you can see inside the homes tensions and fear, the moments of violence, how you were obligated to leave your things, your home, your life and go away, maybe to not come back."

What began as a series of peaceful protests against President Bashar al-Assad in March of 2011 has escalated into a relentless blood bath. Following the armed insurgency of 2011, riots erupted and conflicts stirred, creating a precarious environment of conflicting ideologies and approaches. As the war continues to tear away at the economy and social fabric of Syria, endless gunfire and bombings threaten the lives of the thousands living in high-risk territories. As long as Syria remains a boiling pot of violence and brutality, peace will remain an intangible dream.

Syrian Coalition media office director Khalid Saleh stated, "We call on Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigades to work with civil revolutionary bodies and



BLOODSHED: Rebel clashes continue to ravage Syrian neighborhoods.

local councils operating in those areas to address the threat of those gangs, and make sure those gangsters are hunted down and brought to justice."

To put an end to the perpetual pain and havoc of the war, the international community has sought a new course of action. US Secretary of State John Kerry asserted, "There is no military solution to the violence. There is no other alternative to saving the nation of Syria than negotiations." On Jan. 24, diplomats met in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss the possibility of instating a cease-fire. Russia and

the United States are the prime sponsors of the peace talks, with Russia in support of the Syrian government and the United States in support of the opposition groups. If officials are able to agree on a plan, those living in the central city of Homs can expect aid and relief, which the government have restricted in the past using blockades.

As diplomats discussed and debated peace plans, Marie-Therese Kiriaky, a Syrian woman from Damascus, stood outside the United Nations building and proclaimed, "We are the people whose voices are never heard. Enough is enough. This is the biggest massacre in this century, and it is a shame on humanity that the world doesn't react."

In the coming months, a series of diplomatic meetings will help determine the future of a country plagued with violence. As conflicts within Syria escalate, the United Nations has implemented various humanitarian relief programs in the hope of curtailing starvation and disease. Valerie Amos, the United Nations humanitarian chief, pleaded, "The world must do more for all the people who are displaced. Many families are living in abandoned buildings, schools or in makeshift shelters, without enough food, clean water, or medicine ... We need to do more in a crisis of this magnitude."

(Sources: CNN, Los Angeles Daily News, New York Times, NPR)

Pope announces cardinals

by Natalie Domengeaux
News Editor

On Sunday, Jan. 12, Pope Francis emerged from his balcony and announced the nineteen new cardinals joining the Catholic Church. In the words of the Pope, the new Cardinals are encouraged to "receive this new designation with a simple and humble heart." He remains adamant that their roles will be those of service rather than honor. The men will be formally inducted into the College of Cardinals on Feb. 22.

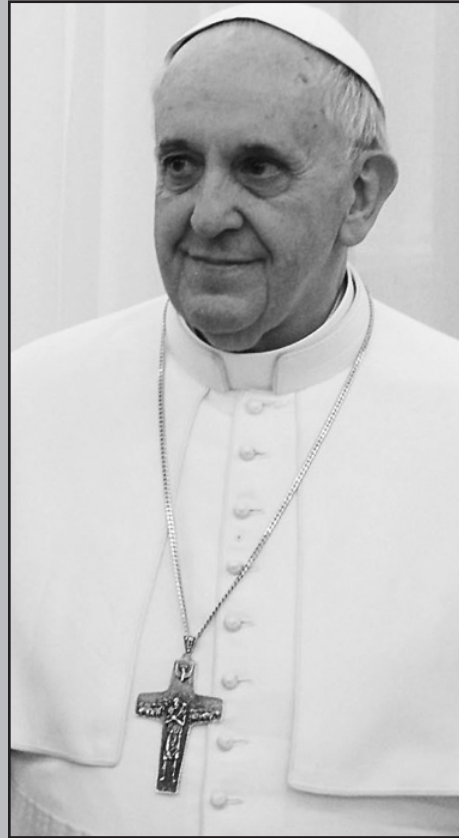
The new cardinals are a diverse group, and many of them hail from the developing world. During his announcement, Pope Francis himself stated that the cardinals from "every part of the world represent the deep church ecclesial relationship between the church of Rome and the other churches scattered throughout the world." In addition to his desire to unite the churches of the world, Pope Francis wanted to demonstrate the church's connection and devotion to the poor.

The group of nineteen includes two surprising choices: a Cardinal from Burkina Faso, as well as the first ever Cardinal from Haiti. Monsignor Chibly Langlois of Haiti is 55-years-old, the youngest of the assembly. Equally surprising, only four Vatican officials were selected. Still, Vatican officials constitute more than one third of the College. Five of the new cardinals come from Latin America, Pope Francis' home region, which marks an increase of one third for the area. However, Latin America contains 40 percent of the world's Catholics, but represents just sixteen percent of the College of Cardinals.

Sixteen cardinals are younger than 80 years of age, and therefore can choose the next Pope in

the upcoming election. Three Cardinals will turn 80 by May, and because 120 are needed for voting eligibility, Pope Francis has selected the ideal number of new Cardinals to bring up the voting ranks.

(Sources: NPR, NBC)



CHURCH CHANGES: The Pope announces newly appointed cardinals.

Malnutrition devastates

by Setareh Raygani
Web Editor

In the Bost Hospital in Afghanistan, a teenage mother named Bibi sits on a bed in the severe acute malnutrition ward with her two young children. Ahmed, who is only three months old, is bigger than his emaciated two-year-old brother, who weighs merely 10 pounds.

These cases are not specific to only the war-torn Helmand Province; they are observed countrywide. Such cases have increased by 50 percent or more compared with 2012, according to the figures published by the United Nations. Many provinces have reported similar situations—war has disrupted the lives of the vulnerable and impoverished. Despite the extreme increase in child malnutrition in Afghanistan, reasons for this rise are unknown. It is also questionable as to why these children are suffering such a great deal when humanitarian effort is pouring into Afghanistan.



FAMISHED: Many starving children require medical attention.



all photos courtesy wikicommons

DEATH: One in five children perish before his or her fifth birthday.

There has been no sign of adults suffering from any sort of malnutrition. The high frequency of childhood malnutrition can be linked to the fact that Afghan women never breast feed. They choose to use powdered milk, and by adding contaminated water from streams, the solution they give to their children induces sickness.

Dr. Mahmoud Dawood, a pediatrician at Bost Hospital, reported that there were seven to eight deaths a month as a result of acute malnutrition from June through August. Doctors all over the country have reported similar rates. Despite these statistics, officials at UNICEF and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health have declined to characterize child malnutrition as a national emergency. Having ten percent of children younger than five suffering from acute malnutrition internationally is considered a catastrophic health emergency, but Afghanistan's released rate is seven percent. Afghans and internationals were outraged by these numbers, as they simply did not add up. Later on the head of the Health Ministry added "that they found challenges in data analysis."

(Source: New York Times)