

World Briefing

THE AMERICAS

Ruling Faults U.S. Execution of Mexican

The International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled Monday that the United States violated an earlier ruling when Texas executed a Mexican man in August for the rape and murder of two teenage girls. In 2004, the court ordered the United States to review the cases of 51 Mexicans on death row who had not been informed of their right to speak with consular officials. The Bush administration had urged states to comply with the tribunal's decision, but Texas judges allowed the lethal injection to proceed. The new ruling ordered the United States to review the cases of the remaining Mexicans facing the death penalty.

MARC LACEY

the global financial crisis. He appointed Yoon Jeung-hyun, a former financial regulator, to lead the Ministry of Strategy and Finance. He also replaced the chief of the main financial regulatory agency and his top economic aide. The shake-up did not signal a major shift in economic policy, market analysts said. Rather, it was aimed at giving Mr. Lee's economic team a new face in the hope of regaining public confidence.

CHOE SANG-HUN

Cambodia: Khmer Rouge Trials to Start



A United Nations-backed tribunal announced that it would open the first hearing on Feb. 17 in the long-delayed trials of five former leaders of the Khmer Rouge, which caused the deaths of 1.7 million Cambodians from 1975 to 1979. The first defendant will be Kaing Guek Eav, 65, left, known as Duch, who commanded the Tuol Sleng torture house, where at least 14,000 people were killed or sent to a killing field for execution. He is charged with an array of crimes, including murder, torture, rape and political persecution. Cases are still being prepared against the other four defendants, all in custody. Thirty years after the Khmer Rouge were ousted in a Vietnamese invasion, no Khmer Rouge leader has ever been brought to a court to face judgment.

SETH MYDANS

Afghanistan: Car Bomb Kills Teenager

A car bomb detonated outside a military base in the eastern town of Khost on Monday, killing a teenager and wounding at least 16 other civilians, military and police officials said. The NATO-led force said it treated 12 wounded people, including five children, a woman and an Afghan guard.

SANGAR RAHIMI

AFRICA

Sudan: Peacekeeping Force to Grow

A joint peacekeeping mission for the Darfur region in western Sudan will expand to its full strength of 26,000 soldiers and police officers by June, a top African Union official said Monday. The official, Ramtane Lamamra, said the increase would nearly double the mission's present strength. But United Nations officials said that in addition to adequate troop numbers, the mission desperately needed logistical help and a peace agreement. "There is no peace for us to keep," said Noureddine al-Mezni, a United Nations spokesman.

(AP)

Zimbabwe: No Progress in Negotiations

Zimbabwe's president and opposition factions wrangled over a power-sharing agreement on Monday, but made no progress, despite the presence of southern African leaders who pressed for a resolution to the stalemate, which has lasted months. After over 12 hours of talk ended in deadlock, the group decided to continue negotiations at a summit meeting of the Southern African Development Community to be held next week, Tomaz Salomao, executive secretary of the regional bloc, told reporters.

(AP)



ALEXANDER NEMENOV/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Prime Ministers Yulia V. Tymoshenko of Ukraine and Vladimir V. Putin of Russia exchanged cordial remarks in Moscow on Monday as they signed a deal on shipments of natural gas.

Russia and Ukraine Sign Agreement on Gas

By ANDREW E. KRAMER

MOSCOW — Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on Monday to resolve their dispute over the price of natural gas and the terms of its transit across Ukraine to Europe, and said they would quickly resume shipments of fuel to freezing homes and idled factories.

After previous agreements collapsed, officials in Europe had been cautious about the deal negotiated over the weekend between the countries' prime ministers, Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and Yulia V. Tymoshenko of Ukraine, which was made formal in a ceremony here on Monday.

In a hopeful sign, however, Mr. Putin said that Gazprom, the Russian gas monopoly, had been ordered to turn the gas back on, for Ukraine's internal market and for re-export. "I hope transit supplies in the European direction will be fully resumed in the near future," he said.

Ukrainian officials have said that once shipments to the border resumed, restoring pressure in the pipelines for export elsewhere in Europe would require about 36 hours.

As it played out over three cold weeks, the gas shutoff left hundreds of thousands of homes in southeastern Europe without heat and shuttered hundreds of

factories.

Slovakia, alarming its neighbors, had proposed restarting an obsolete nuclear reactor to make up for the gas shortfalls.

Yet tensions remain between Russia and Ukraine. On Monday, Russia's president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, signed an order imposing sanctions on countries

Vladimirovna Tymoshenko," Mr. Putin said. "Faced with one of the hardest situations, she took responsibility for making these important decisions."

Ms. Tymoshenko said, "I am very much obliged to Vladimir Vladimirovich and his team for finding the opportunity to grant special terms for Ukraine."

The contracts will be valid for 10 years but adjusted to current market prices.

The contract provides that the price of Russian natural gas in Ukraine will be pegged to prices in Europe, which are linked to international oil prices, but with a 20 percent discount in 2009. The discount will be eliminated next year.

Under that formula, Ukraine could be expected to pay \$208 to \$240 for 1,000 cubic meters of natural gas. It paid \$179.50 last year.

Russia had initially asked for \$250 but raised that to \$450 in the midst of the shutoff.

Ukraine, meanwhile, accepted a transit fee that is about half the average rate in Europe, but with the understanding that it will be raised next year.

Russia halted shipments of gas to Ukraine on Jan. 1 and then, accusing Ukraine of siphoning gas intended for export, halted shipments intended for export on Jan. 6.

A 10-year deal to resolve a dispute that had Europe shivering.

that sold weaponry to Georgia, the former Soviet republic that Russia fought in August.

The sanctions would halt military and technical cooperation with such countries. Ukraine has sold weaponry to Georgia and could be harmed by the measure, since its military industry is closely entwined with Russia's as a legacy of the Soviet Union.

But in a sign of some softening of disagreement, at least over the gas business, the two prime ministers complimented each other graciously after the signing — a rarity in their relations.

"I would like to thank the Ukrainian prime minister, Yulia

MIDDLE EAST

Iran: 2 Prisoners Are AIDS Doctors

Four Iranians imprisoned on charges of trying to overthrow the government with the backing of the C.I.A. include two prominent AIDS doctors, an Iranian intelligence official said Monday. The government reported their convictions on Saturday but had not identified the men, nor reported when they had been arrested or tried. But the semiofficial Fars news agency quoted the unidentified official as saying that two of the prisoners were "doctors named Arash and Kamiar Alaei." The two men, brothers, founded Iran's first H.I.V. prevention program and have been jailed since June.

NAZILA FATHI

EUROPE

Greece: Kidnappers Free Businessman

Kidnappers freed an elderly Greek shipping magnate early Tuesday morning, eight days after abducting him at gunpoint from a seaside suburb of Athens, the police said. The shipping executive, Pericles Panagopoulos, 74, was spotted in a parking lot on a main highway in an industrial area outside Athens, the police said. His wife, Katerina, told the Alter television network that he was unharmed.

(AP)

ASIA

Pakistan: School Attacks Tied to Taliban

Five schools in Pakistan's Swat Valley were bombed Monday in what the authorities believe was part of a Taliban campaign against the education of girls. Militants, who have blown up or burned down more than 170 schools in northwestern Pakistan, had ordered all girls' schools in the area closed by Jan. 15. The attacks occurred hours after the government vowed to reopen all schools in the area by the end of the school holidays in March. Schools in the valley are closed for the winter vacation.

(AP)

South Korea: Economic Aides Replaced

President Lee Myung-bak replaced his top economic aides on Monday in an effort to restore public trust in his government's handling of the economy during

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An Invitation to a New Partnership

From the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to President Barack Obama



Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu
Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Dear President OBAMA,

With great respect, the Organization of the Islamic Conference would like to congratulate you on behalf of the Muslim world on your groundbreaking election as President of the United States. The Muslim world has cheered your election and holds high hopes for your historic presidency. The eyes of the world now eagerly await your leadership and the fulfillment of your vision, promises, and pledges beyond America's shores.

The desire for peace is universal. Yet as the conflicts of the last decade have shown, the quest for peace is easily frustrated. We warmly welcome your expressed desire to give a major address in a Muslim nation soon after you assume the presidency and hope that it will mark the beginning of a more fruitful and better-informed dialogue between the West and the Muslim world. Above all, what is needed is the restoration of mutual confidence. Throughout the globe, Muslims hunger for a new era of peace, concordance, and tranquility. We firmly believe that America, with your guidance, can help foster that peace, though real peace can only be shared — never imposed. A nation can either be great or feared, but rarely both at the same time.

Myths

Many myths about Islam, fostered by extremists in both the West and East, have proliferated in the last decade, and a new word — "Islamophobia" — has even entered the world's lexicon to describe anti-Muslim acts of prejudice and violence. Despite these pernicious myths, you will find that Islam is a religion of peace. Tolerance is its benchmark and borne of the very nature of Islam. Nor is Islam an exclusive religion. It is an integral part of the history of world religions. It continues and confirms the previous scriptures. Along with Christianity and Judaism, Islam emanates from the same part of the world, comes from the same God, and holds to the same Prophets, mainly Abraham. It has been tested over fourteen hundred years, and shown itself to be a religion of compassion, mercy, justice, and equality.

Extremists in any faith or tradition are rare, though they often command disproportionate attention. But the often overlooked truth is Islam is also the religion of moderation. It celebrates diversity and acknowledges and venerates a wide array of religions.

Islam, in fact, abhors extremism and fanaticism and calls for treading the path of the "middle way" in favor of tolerance and reconciliation. It exhorts Muslims to be morally responsive to the truth and to goodness, and to be alert to all that is false, evil or destructive.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), which I have the honor to represent,

is not a religious organization. After the United Nations, it is the largest official, inter-governmental organization in the world. It is composed of 57 sovereign states, almost all of whom are secular. The population of these states collectively amounts to 1.5 billion — or one fourth of humanity.

"Throughout the globe, Muslims hunger for a new era of peace... We firmly believe that America, with your guidance, can help foster that peace, though real peace can only be shared — never imposed."

Moderation and Modernization

One of the OIC's guiding principles is to practice "moderation and modernization." To cite one example, it was at our demand that the UN General Assembly organized a host of events and activities around the world to disseminate the idea of "Dialogue among civilizations" as an alternative to those who predict a coming "clash of civilizations."

We have been alarmed by this tendency to divide the world into rival civilizations — civilized and uncivilized, good and evil, friend and enemy. As a youth who spent part of his childhood abroad, you are well aware of the dangers of stereotyping. We believe you will have a unique opportunity to promote tolerance and nurture vibrant multi-cultural societies.

It is for these reasons that the OIC has been in the forefront of the Muslim battle against terrorism.

Terrorism is a global phenomenon. It has no specific culture, race, or region. The root causes of terrorism are surely complicated but they include deprivation, poverty, despair and, most importantly, political injustice. Children do not emerge from the womb to announce they will become

terrorists. They learn to be terrorists when injustice and tragedy are twinned with powerlessness. The decades-long suffering of the Palestinian people provides only the most recent and potent illustration of the link between oppression, injustice, and violence. The violence in the Mideast and the Palestinian people deserve an urgent and just remedy.

Change and Partnership

The most powerful word in your election campaign was "change." Change must make the world a better place, correct wrongs and right the twisted. As an organization, we too have undergone substantial reform in charting an enlightened future for the Muslim world. As Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I wish to assure you that we will be at your side to see that justice prevails and that the forces which are out to undo peace are defeated. At the OIC we are firmly committed to cooperating with you and your

new administration to foster constructive dialogue and facilitate solutions to the intractable predicaments plaguing the Muslim world and beyond.

In this regard, we are keen to build on the commendable initiative taken recently regarding the appointment of a U.S. Special Envoy to the OIC, and opening an office for him in the U.S. State Department. We are confident that this useful post will be endorsed and perhaps expanded under your leadership.

We also look forward to working with the new Secretary of State Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is no stranger to the Muslim world. In the coming months, we hope to build on the existing channel of communication between the United States and the OIC and open new ones.

Muslims today, around the world, believe that they have compelling strategic and moral reasons to cooperate and peacefully co-exist with the United States in particular, and with the West in general. Past episodes of short-lived misunderstandings should give way to a long future of peaceful cohabitation, making use of our shared civilizations and values to build a better future for all mankind. As you eloquently stated in your election-night acceptance speech in November, "our stories are singular but our destiny is shared."

from **Changing Course**

The Report of the Leadership Group on US-Muslim Engagement

In September 2008, after nearly two years of research and dialogue, a distinguished, bipartisan group of American leaders concerned by the rise in tension and violence between the U.S. and Muslim countries and communities, published its landmark report *Changing Course: A New Direction for U.S. Relations with the Muslim World*. The Leadership Group's mix of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian members included such luminaries as Madeleine Albright, the former Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, the former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Dennis Ross, former U.S. Special Middle East Envoy, congressman Vin Weber, pollster Daniel Yankelovich, and author Steven Covey. *Changing Course*, available at www.usmuslimengagement.org, provides a compelling roadmap for bolstering U.S. relations with the Muslim world and reducing tensions in the next decade.

From the summary: "This Report outlines a comprehensive strategy for the U.S. to enhance international security by improving relations with

key Muslim countries and communities. The strategy reflects the consensus of 34 American leaders, including 11 Muslim Americans, in the fields of foreign and defense policy, politics, business, religion, education, public opinion, psychology, philanthropy, and conflict resolution. "We come from different walks of life, faiths, political perspectives, and professional disciplines. Our shared goal is to develop and work to implement a wise, widely supportable strategy to make the U.S. and the world safer by responding to the primary causes of tension between the U.S. and Muslims around the world. We believe that a strategy that builds on shared and complementary interests with Muslims in many countries is feasible, desirable, and consistent with core American values.

The central message of our strategy is that the U.S. government, business, faith, education, and media leaders must work with Muslim counterparts to build a coalition that will turn the tide against extremism. Our recommendations are directed primarily to U.S. leaders and institutions, but we can succeed only if counterparts in Muslim majority countries and communities also take responsibility for

addressing key challenges: reducing extremism, resolving political and sectarian conflicts, holding governments accountable, creating more vibrant economies, correcting misconceptions, and engaging in dialogue to build mutual respect and understanding.

from **Islam and the West**

"I believe wholeheartedly that the links between these two worlds matter more today than ever before, because the degree of misunderstanding between the Islamic and Western worlds remains dangerously high, and because the need for the two to live and work together in our increasingly interdependent world has never been greater.

It is odd, in many ways, that misunderstandings between Islam and the West should persist. We share many key values in common: respect for knowledge, for justice, compassion towards the poor and underprivileged, the importance of family life, respect for parents.

If there is much misunderstanding in the West about the nature of Islam, there is also much

ignorance about the debt our own culture and civilisation owe to the Islamic world.

We shall need to work harder to understand each other, to drain out any poison between us, and to lay the ghost of suspicion and fear."

— HRH The Prince of Wales

(speech at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies)



OIC at a glance...

Being the largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is the collective and institutional voice of the Muslim world — over 1.5 billion people.

The OIC mission is grounded in ensuring the safeguarding and protection of the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony, good governance, development and education, womens rights, and international goodwill. Its components include 21 bodies fostering its mission in the areas of higher education, banking, international commerce, public health, and science and technology.

The OIC welcomes your comments. Please address emails to ishanti@oic-oci.org.

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