

France slammed at UN over racism, police violence



Policemen stand during a demonstration on May Day (Labour Day), to mark the international day of the workers, in Paris, France, on May 1, 2023.
● ALAIN JOCARD/AFP

Several nations voiced concern at the United Nations Monday over police violence, including against protesters, in France, as the country headed into another day of mass demonstrations. Attacks on migrants, racial profiling and religious intolerance were also raised during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – which all 193 UN countries must undergo every four years, AFP reported.

France must “take measures to, in a transparent manner, address allegations regarding excessive use of force by police and gendarmerie against protestors during demonstrations,” Sweden’s representative told the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Other countries raised similar concerns, including Denmark, Liechtenstein and Norway, but also Russia, Venezuela and Iran – three countries that themselves regularly face accusations of police violence and other serious and widespread human rights violations.

“We are concerned about the harsh and sometimes violent measures aimed at dispersing peaceful citizens,” Russia’s representative Kristina Sukacheva, told the council. The criticism came as France braced for up to 1.5 million protesters to fill its streets to mark the May 1 workers day, even as President Emmanuel Macron tries to steer the country on from a divisive pension law that has sparked anger, pan-bashing and social unrest. It echoed growing outcry in France of the police for disproportionate use of force in dealing with the crowds, amid the months of protests over the move to raise France’s pension age from 62 to 64.

During Monday’s review, several countries including the US and China called on France to do more to battle racial and religious discrimination.

The Chinese representative decried “a rise of racism and xenophobia” in France, urging it to “stop ... measures that violate rights of migrants”. Brazil and Japan decried “racial profiling by security forces”. Sabine Balim, a judicial advisor with the French Interior Ministry, told the council the use of force was “strictly supervised, controlled, and in the case of erroneous use, sanctioned.” She also stressed that “France condemns any form of racial profiling.”

UN envoy says Sudan’s warring sides agree to negotiate

Sudan’s warring generals have agreed to send representatives for negotiations, potentially in Saudi Arabia, the United Nations’ top official in the country told The Associated Press on Monday, even as the two sides clashed in the capital despite another three-day extension of a fragile cease-fire.

If the talks come together, they would initially focus on establishing a “stable and reliable” cease-fire monitored by national and international observers, Volker Perthes said, but he warned there were still challenges in holding the negotiations. A string of temporary truces over the past week has eased fighting only in some areas, but in others fierce battles have continued to drive civilians from their homes and push the country into disaster, AP reported. Humanitarian groups have been trying to restore the flow of help to a country where nearly a third of the population of 46 million relied on international aid even before the explosion of violence. The U.N. food agency on Monday said it was ending the temporary suspension of its operations in Sudan, put in place after three of its team members were killed in the war-wrecked Darfur region early in the fighting.

The World Food Program will resume food distribution in four provinces – al-Qadaref, Gezira, Kassala and White Nile – working in areas where security permits, said Executive Director Cindy McCain said in a statement. The numbers of those in need of help will “grow significantly as fighting continues,” she said. “To best protect our necessary humanitarian workers and the people of Sudan, the fighting must stop.”

A day earlier, the International Committee of the Red Cross flew in a planeload of medical supplies to bring some relief to hospitals overwhelmed by the mayhem. Direct talks, if they take place, would be the first major sign of progress since fighting erupted on April 15 between the army and a rival paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces. For much of the conflict, army chief Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan and RSF commander Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo have appeared determined to fight to the end.



● AP PHOTO

NEWS IN BRIEF

Erdogan: Turkish forces killed DAESH chief in Syria



AP – Turkish forces have killed the leader of the DAESH terrorist group during an operation in Syria, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said late Sunday. Erdogan told TRT Turk television in an interview that the terrorist group’s leader, code-named Abu Hussein al-Qurayshi, was killed in a strike conducted on Saturday.

Nurses in England walk out again



AFP – Nurses in England walked out again Monday, with some critical services due to be hit for the first time. The industrial action is the latest stoppage in an increasingly bitter dispute with the government over pay and conditions. The 28-hour strike, which started at 8:00 pm on Sunday, came after members of the Royal College of Nursing earlier this month voted to reject a 5% government pay increase offer.

Lula pledges new minimum wage policy



REUTERS – Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva pledged on Sunday to introduce a new policy of real increases in the minimum wage and announced plans to raise the income tax exemption for lower-income earners. The remarks, made during a radio and TV broadcast for Labor Day, which is a national holiday on Monday, reinforce leftist Lula’s strategy of boosting workers’ disposable income to help spur economic growth.



Filipino protesters hold slogans as they march along a road to mark International Labor Day in Manila, Philippines, on May 1, 2023.
● JOEAL CALUPITAN/AP

May Day rallies tap into broader frustrations

domestic workers in Lebanon marched in a country plunged in economic crisis, AP reported.

While May Day is marked around the world on May 1 as a celebration of labor rights, this year’s rallies tapped into broader frustrations. Climate activists spraypainted a Louis Vuitton museum in Paris, and protesters in Germany demonstrated against violence targeting women. Celebrations were forced indoors in Pakistan and tinged with political tensions in Turkey, as both countries

face high-stakes elections. Russia’s war in Ukraine overshadowed scaled-back events in Moscow, where Communist-led May Day celebrations were once massive affairs.

Across Asia, this year’s May Day events unleashed pent-up frustration after three years of COVID-19 restrictions. This year’s events had bigger turnouts than in previous years in Asian cities, as activists in many countries argued governments should do more to improve workers’ lives.

Across France, thousands

marched in what unions hope are the country’s biggest May Day demonstrations in years, mobilized against President Emmanuel Macron’s recent move to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. While marchers appeared largely peaceful, police detained 22 people in Paris and dispersed protesters in Lyon with tear gas after troublemakers smashed bank windows and other property. French police have come under fire for using drones to film disruptions on Monday in some cities.

New Uzbekistan in the making as nation endorses constitutional reform

International Desk

The people of Uzbekistan approved the amendments in the Constitution in a reform held on Sunday. Uzbeks cast their ballots to show the green light for reshaping the Central Asian country into New Uzbekistan, where, according to the Central Election Commission, the referendum was passed with over 90% of the vote.

The total number of voters exceeded 19.7 million, as over 16.67 million registered voters used their right of freedom of expression in the historical phase of the transformation of the country (84.54% of entire voters). 90.21% of the people voted “YES,” giving their approval to the revised Constitution.

Uzbeks attended the event in more than 10,700 polling stations across the

country, while 55 stations were established at diplomatic and other representative offices in 39 foreign countries.

Over 380 international observers, including 184 from 14 international organizations and 199 from 45 countries, directly monitored the referendum. Iranian Chairman of the Iran-Uzbekistan Parliamentary Friendship Group Gholamreza Nouri-Qezeljeh was in

Tashkent to observe the polling.

On March 10, the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan, the lower house of parliament, adopted the law “on new regulations in the Uzbekistan constitution,” after which the Senate approved the draft Constitution and that the new regulations and amendments to be placed to a public vote. The number of articles in the updated Constitution



● IRAN DAILY

has increased from 128 to 155, and the number of norms has increased from 275 to 434. International experience was also considered, involving leading specialists and experts

from a variety of fields. The new Constitution aims to establish a strong parliament, a compact and responsible government, and an independent and fair judicial system.