

UK king's coronation draws apathy, criticism in former colonies



When King Charles III is crowned today, soldiers carrying flags from the Bahamas, South Africa, Tuvalu and beyond will march alongside British troops in a spectacular military procession in honor of the monarch.

For some, the scene will affirm the ties that bind Britain and its former colonies. But for many others in the Commonwealth, a group of nations mostly made up of places once claimed by the British Empire, Charles' coronation is seen with apathy at best, AP wrote.

In those countries, the first crowning of a British monarch in 70 years is an occasion to reflect on oppression and colonialism's bloody past. The displays of pageantry in London will jar especially with growing calls

in the Caribbean to sever all ties with the monarchy.

"Interest in British royalty has waned since more Jamaicans are waking to the reality that the survivors of colonialism and the holocaust of slavery are yet to receive reparatory justice," the Rev. Sean Major-Campbell, an Anglican priest said. The coronation is "only relevant in so far as it kicks us in the face with the reality that our head of state is simply so by virtue of biology," he added.

As British sovereign, Charles is also head of state of 14 other countries, though the role is largely ceremonial. These realms, which include Australia, Canada, Jamaica, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, represent a minority of the Commonwealth nations: Most of the

56 members are republics, even if some still sport the Union Jack on their flags.

Barbados was the most recent Commonwealth country to remove the British monarch as its head of state, replacing Charles' mother, Queen Elizabeth II, with an elected president in 2021. The decision spurred similar republican movements in neighboring Jamaica, the Bahamas and Belize.

Call for apologizing

On Thursday, campaigners from 12 Commonwealth countries wrote to the monarch urging him to apologize for the legacies of British colonialism.

Among the signatories was Lidia Thorpe, an Australian senator, who said that Charles should "begin a process of repairing the damage

of colonization, including returning the stolen wealth that has been taken from our people."

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese favors ditching the monarchy, though he has ruled out holding a referendum during his current three-year term. "I want to see an Australian as Australia's head of state," Albanese said. In India, once the jewel of the British Empire, there's scant media attention and very little interest in the coronation.

"India has moved on," and most Indians "have no emotional ties with the royal family," Pavan K. Varma, a writer and former diplomat, said. Instead, the royals are seen more like amusing celebrities, he said.

Not everyone is as critical.

In Uganda, political analyst

Asuman Bisiika says British culture continues to have a strong influence on young people in the East African country, especially those who follow English soccer. There is also a lot of goodwill for Queen Elizabeth II, who died in September after 70 years on the throne. Experts say that despite its flaws, historical baggage and fraying edges, the Commonwealth still holds appeal, especially for poorer nations. Gabon and Togo, which are former French colonies with no colonial links to Britain, became the association's newest members last year. Most observers believe countries like Jamaica that want an elected head of state are likely to retain their memberships.



Guards carry flags from Commonwealth countries during a full tri-service and Commonwealth rehearsal at RAF Odiham in Hook, England, on April 30, 2023.

● ANDREW MATTHEWS/AP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Strong earthquake hits Japan, killing one, injuring 13



AP - A strong, shallow earthquake hit central Japan on Friday, killing at least one person and injuring 13 others, but no tsunami warning was issued. The magnitude 6.2 quake struck Ishikawa prefecture on the west coast of Japan's main island of Honshu, the U.S. Geological Survey said. The Japan Meteorological Agency measured the quake at 6.5 and said it was centered at a depth of about 12km.

Sweden arrests far-right politician in absentia: Report



AA - Far-right Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan, who burned a copy of the Qur'an earlier this year, has been reportedly arrested in absentia in Sweden.

The Malmo Prosecutor's Office issued an arrest warrant for Paludan on suspicion of "several crimes," Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet reported. Paludan has been investigated a couple of months ago for "incitement against a group of people, insult and gross assault against an official," it said.

Russia orders partial evacuation near Ukraine front line

Russia on Friday ordered the evacuation of families with children and of the elderly from Russian-held frontline areas in southern Ukraine because of an increase in shelling from the Ukrainian side.

"In the past few days, the enemy has stepped up shelling of settlements

close to the front line," the Russian-installed head of the Zaporizhzhia region, Yevgeny Balitsky, wrote on social media, AFP reported.

"I have therefore made a decision to evacuate first of all children and parents, elderly people, disabled people and hospital

patients," he wrote.

"There will be a temporary evacuation" from 18 places, he said, including the town of Energodar where the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant is located.

The plant - Europe's biggest - has been held by Russia since the first day of the conflict and is now

near the front line, causing international concern.

Ukraine has been preparing an offensive against Russian forces for months and some analysts say sabotage attacks and long-distance strikes behind Russian lines in recent days show it is now imminent.



Ukrainian soldiers form ranks take part in a military training exercise in the Kherson region, southern Ukraine, on February 1, 2023.

● GENYA SAVILOV/AFP

Fighting rages in Khartoum, civilians say they have been forgotten



Smoke rises above buildings after an aerial bombardment, during clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army in Khartoum North, Sudan, on May 1, 2023.

● MOHAMMED NURELDIN ABDALLAH/REUTERS

Heavy gunfire echoed around Khartoum again on Friday as civilians trapped in the Sudanese capital said the army and rival paramilitary forces were fighting on and ignoring their plight.

"It's been four days without electricity and our situation is dif-

ficult... We are the victims of a war that we aren't a part of. No one cares about the citizen," said 48-year-old Othman Hassan from the southern outskirts of the city, Reuters reported.

Live footage on Al Jazeera showed smoke rising in an area right outside Khartoum's presidential palace, and across the River Nile in the adjoining city of Bahri.

Despite multiple ceasefire declarations, the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) appeared to be battling each other for control of territory in the capital ahead of proposed talks.

So far, army leader Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, commonly known as Hemedti, have shown little public willingness to negotiate after more than two weeks of fighting.

The sudden collapse into warfare has killed hundreds, triggered a humanitarian disaster, sent an exodus of refugees to neighbouring

states and risks dragging in outside powers, further destabilising an already restive region.

Across swathes of Khartoum, factories, banks and shops have been looted or damaged, power and water supplies have been failing and residents have reported steep price rises and shortages of basic goods. Whole neighbourhoods have emptied out, leading people to fear for the houses they left behind.

The Sudanese Doctors Union said in total 17 hospitals had been damaged by fighting and 20 forcibly evacuated since the start of the violence. Sixty of the 88 hospitals in Khartoum are out of service, it said, with many of the rest only offering partial service.

"Sudan's warring armies are showing reckless disregard for civilian lives by using inaccurate weapons in populated urban areas," Human Rights Watch Sudan researcher Mohamed Osman said in a report.

The fighting stems from tensions

between two rival factions, the army and RSF, which had shared power after a coup in 2021. They have accused each other of breaching a string of truces. Neither side made a statement on the fighting on Friday.

The U.N. pressed the warring sides to guarantee safe passage of aid after six trucks were looted. U.N. aid chief Martin Griffiths said he hoped to have face-to-face meetings with both sides to secure guarantees from them for aid convoys.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that \$13m to \$14m worth of food destined for people in need in Sudan had been plundered so far.

About 100,000 people have fled Sudan with little food or water to neighbouring countries, the United Nations says.

The United Nations refugee agency called on governments to let fleeing civilians into their territory.

Eight school staff shot dead in Pakistan



CNN - An attack by unknown gunmen at a school in Pakistan's northern province of Khyber Pakhtunkwa has left eight school staff dead and two others injured.

The attack took place after exams at a local high school.