

## March 2013

### INTERNATIONAL

#### Catholic Church

March 13—A conclave of cardinals at the Vatican elects Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina as pope, succeeding Benedict XVI, who resigned in February. The new pope, 76, takes the name Francis. He is the 1st pope from Latin America, home to some 40% of the world's Catholics, and the 1st from outside Europe since the 8th century.

#### Israeli-Palestinian conflict

March 20—US President Barack Obama makes his 1st visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories as president. Obama encourages both sides to resume peace talks, but drops his previous demand for Israel to immediately halt settlement activity.

#### CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

March 24—President François Bozizé is ousted by a rebel group, Seleka, and flees to Cameroon.  
 March 26—Seleka leader Michel Djotodia says he is suspending the constitution and parliament for 3 years.

#### CHINA

March 14—Xi Jinping (the sole candidate) is formally elected president by the National People's Congress, succeeding Hu Jintao. His election completes a leadership transition begun in 2012, when Xi replaced Hu as head of the Communist Party and the military. Li Keqiang is elected prime minister the next day, succeeding Wen Jiabao.

#### CONGO, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF

March 18—Bosco Ntaganda, a leader of the M23 rebel group in eastern Congo, turns himself in at the US embassy in Rwanda to face charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the Netherlands. He is accused of recruiting child soldiers, murder, rape, and sexual slavery. The US transfers him to The Hague March 22.  
 March 28—The UN Security Council approves a new "intervention brigade" with a 1-year mandate to take offensive action against rebel groups in eastern Congo. The brigade, with an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 troops, will be part of a UN peacekeeping force in Congo, which currently numbers 17,700 troops.

#### CYPRUS

March 19—The parliament rejects a deal that called for Cyprus to impose a tax on bank deposits in exchange for a bailout from the European Union and the IMF. The Cypriot banking system is heavily used by wealthy Russians as a tax haven. This makes a bailout controversial in creditor nations, particularly Germany.  
 March 25—The government strikes a deal with the EU and the IMF for a €10 billion (\$13 billion) bailout, which calls for confiscating a percentage of uninsured deposits over 100,000 euros. The government imposes strict capital controls; bank accounts have been frozen since March 16.

#### HUNGARY

March 11—The parliament approves a constitutional amendment proposed by the center-right government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, widely seen as part of a series of moves by Orban to centralize government control. Critics of the amendment, including the EU and the US, warn that it will undermine judicial independence and the rule of law. Some EU nations, including

Germany, call for cutting funding for members that fail to uphold democratic principles.

#### INDIA

March 21—The parliament passes a law imposing tougher penalties for violence against women and criminalizing related offenses such as voyeurism and stalking. The legislation is a response to a December 2012 gang rape in New Delhi that left the victim dead and set off mass protests against pervasive rape and sexual harassment.

#### IRAQ

March 19—On the 10th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, bombings and other attacks across Baghdad, mostly targeting Shiite neighborhoods, kill nearly 60.

#### ISRAEL

March 14—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaches a coalition agreement with 2 new secular parties that made strong debuts in a January general election. Netanyahu's conservative Likud-Beiteinu bloc will be joined by the centrist Yesh Atid and the far right Jewish Home, as well as a smaller centrist party led by former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. As demanded by Yesh Atid and Jewish Home, the coalition will exclude religious parties that were in Netanyahu's previous government. Four days later, Netanyahu's new government is sworn in.  
 March 22—In a telephone call, Prime Minister Netanyahu apologizes to his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, for a 2010 incident in which Israeli commandos killed 8 Turkish citizens while boarding a ship in an aid flotilla attempting to break Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip. Turkey had since cut off diplomatic ties with Israel. As a result of the call, brokered by Obama during his visit to Israel, Israel and Turkey say they will normalize relations.

#### KENYA

March 4—Deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta—a son of independent Kenya's founding president, Jomo Kenyatta—wins a presidential election with 50.7% of the vote, defeating Prime Minister Raila Odinga, who takes 43%. Odinga refuses to concede, alleging fraud. However, there is little violence, in contrast to the 2007 election, which unleashed ethnic clashes that left more than 1,300 dead. Kenyatta faces charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court in connection with the 2007 election violence.  
 March 30—The Supreme Court upholds Kenyatta's victory. Odinga, who had asked the court to invalidate the results and order a new election, now concedes.

#### MOLDOVA

March 5—The parliament passes a no-confidence motion to bring down the pro-Western government of Prime Minister Vlad Filat, jeopardizing Moldova's prospects of signing an association agreement with the EU.

#### MYANMAR

March 22—President Thein Sein orders the army to restore order in the central city of Meiktila, where at least 32 have been killed in sectarian violence after Buddhist mobs attacked Muslims. Anti-Muslim riots in western Myanmar left 150 dead in 2012.

