

January 2014

INTERNATIONAL

Korean Peninsula

- Jan. 1—In his first public speech since the execution of his uncle and top adviser Jang Song-thaek, leader Kim Jong-un calls for improving relations with South Korea.
- Jan. 27—South Korea proposes to North Korea that the 2 sides hold family reunions between Feb. 17–22. The meetings would allow for relatives separated by the Korean War to meet for the 1st time in 6 decades.

Maritime disputes

- Jan. 27—The International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands, rules in favor of Peru in a 6-year-long dispute over its maritime border with neighboring Chile. The decision gives Peru control over an 8,000-square-mile swath of the Pacific Ocean that Chile had claimed. The dispute derived from the 1879–83 War of the Pacific, in which Chile defeated Peru and Bolivia and seized territory from both countries.

ALGERIA

- Jan. 26—Algeria's largest Islamist political party, the Movement of Society for Peace, announces it will not participate in an April 17 presidential election, citing concerns over fraud. The decision comes after similar declarations by smaller parties earlier in the month. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who suffered a stroke in 2013, has yet to declare whether or not he will run for a 4th term. He has been president since 1999.

CAMBODIA

- Jan. 4—Prime Minister Hun Sen bans public demonstrations throughout Cambodia after street clashes with police the day before leave 4 protesters dead in Phnom Penh, the capital. Demonstrators claimed that a July 2013 election was stolen by Hun Sen, who has ruled the country since 1985. Garment workers demanding a doubling of the minimum wage spearheaded the protests.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

- Jan. 10—President Michel Djotodia and Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye resign after pressure from regional African leaders and protests denouncing the government's corruption and ineffectiveness in curbing escalating sectarian violence that has left more than 1,000 dead. Djotodia's largely Muslim rebel group, Seleka, overthrew the previous government in March 2013.

CHINA

- Jan. 26—Legal activist Xu Zhiyong is sentenced to 4 years in prison for "gathering a crowd to disturb public order." The sentencing is widely seen as an effort by the ruling Communist Party to quash Zhiyong's grassroots New Citizens Movement, which is outspoken in its criticism of public corruption and its demands for rule of law and democratization.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Jan. 29—President Milos Zeman appoints Social Democrat Bohuslav Sobotka as his new prime minister. Sobotka, heading a new center-left government, has vowed to roll back the austerity measures enacted by the previous conservative government. The appointments end a political stalemate.

EGYPT

- Jan. 1—The government detains 3 Al Jazeera journalists, including bureau chief Mohamed Fahmy, for allegedly conspiring with the Muslim Brotherhood, which the government declared a terrorist organization in December.
- Jan. 19—Official results from a Jan. 14–15 referendum indicate that 98.1% of voters approved a new constitution drafted by the military-led government.
- Jan. 29—Prosecutors levy charges against Fahmy and 20 other Al Jazeera journalists for conspiracy with a terrorist group and manipulating video to give a false impression of civil war and state collapse.

IRAN

- Jan. 19—UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon invites Iran to a Syrian peace conference in Geneva. The invitation draws strong objections from US officials, who cite Iran's active military support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Ban withdraws the invitation the next day.
- Jan. 31—The Geneva talks end without any apparent progress, amid acrimony between representatives of the Assad government and opposition groups.

LATVIA

- Jan. 1—Latvia officially replaces its currency, the lats, with the euro, becoming the 18th country to join the euro zone.

LEBANON

- Jan. 16—The UN's Special Tribunal on Lebanon in The Hague begins the trial in absentia of 4 alleged agents of the Shia militant group Hezbollah accused of the 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

MEXICO

- Jan. 27—Mexican authorities arrest Dionisio Loya Plancarte, a leader of the Knights Templar, an organized crime and drug cartel that has terrorized the western state of Michoacán since 2011. Vigilante groups that formed to fight the cartel have refused to disband, and Jan. 27 reach an agreement with the government to be integrated into police or temporary military units.

NIGERIA

- Jan. 13—President Goodluck Jonathan signs a law outlawing same-sex unions and membership in gay rights groups. Police subsequently arrest dozens of gay men.
- Jan. 26—Gunmen from the militant Islamist group Boko Haram assault the northeastern village of Abuja and kill at least 45 people. The attack is one of the group's deadliest to date.

PAKISTAN

- Jan. 19—Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, an umbrella organization of militant groups, takes responsibility for a car bombing inside a military compound in the city of Bannu in the North Waziristan tribal region. The attack kills at least 20 members of a paramilitary unit.

PHILIPPINES

- Jan. 25—The government signs an accord with the the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the country's largest insurgent group, ending 40 years of violence in the south between Muslim secessionists and the military. The agreement creates an autonomous Muslim region to be named Bangsamoro, delegating security and management of local resources to regional authorities.

SOUTH SUDAN

Jan. 23—The government of President Salva Kiir and rebels supporting his former vice president, Riek Machar, sign a cease-fire in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to end a conflict that began in December. The fighting has left 1,000s dead and displaced more than 500,000. Ugandan forces intervened on the government's side.

SPAIN

Jan. 7—Magistrate José Castro of Majorca formally accuses Princess Cristina of money laundering, tax fraud, and embezzlement, summoning her to court in March. The accusations stem from an ongoing corruption investigation involving the princess's husband, prominent businessman Íñaki Urdangarín, the Duke of Palma. She is the first Spanish royal in modern history to face criminal charges.

Jan. 19—Demonstrators gather in downtown Madrid to protest Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's health care cuts and proposed restrictions on abortion, which would allow the termination of a pregnancy only in cases of rape or endangerment of the mother's life. The proposal has also drawn criticism from the European Parliament. The current abortion law, adopted under the previous Socialist administration, allows women to end a pregnancy in the first 14 weeks.

THAILAND

Jan. 7—An anticorruption board opens investigations of 308 lawmakers—mostly from the governing party, Pheu Thai—for “malfeasance in office” related to a constitutional amendment that would have made the Senate a fully elected chamber.

Jan. 12—Antigovernment protesters seize control of major roads in Bangkok. Escalating 2 months of demonstrations, the opposition blockades government offices and lays siege to the homes of top officials in the administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, whose party is expected to win a general election scheduled for Feb. 2.

Jan. 21—The government declares a state of emergency in and around Bangkok, setting curfews and banning political gather-

ings of more than 5 people. Protesters continue demanding a postponement of the election; grenade attacks by unknown assailants have killed 1 and injured dozens.

TUNISIA

Jan. 9—Prime Minister Ali Larayedh of the Islamist Ennahda Party resigns and hands power over to a caretaker government that will oversee elections later in 2014. Members of the National Constituent Assembly had demanded the resignation of the government since July 2013, when the secular politician Mohamed Brahmi was assassinated.

Jan. 26—The National Constituent Assembly approves a new constitution, the product of intense negotiations between the Islamist majority and the secular minority. Ennahda made major concessions, dropping its demands for the constitution to declare Tunisia an Islamic state under Sharia law.

TURKEY

Jan. 17—The Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors reassigns 20 high-ranking prosecutors working on a corruption probe that targets Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's inner circle. The purge is seen as Erdoğan's latest attempt to push back against the inquiry, which he has described as a plot against him and his Justice and Development Party as it prepares for 3 elections in the next 18 months.

UKRAINE

Jan. 20—Antigovernment rallies in Kiev turn violent when men in balaclavas attack the police. Protests began in November in opposition to President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to suspend a partnership and trade agreement with the EU and instead turn to Russia for financial aid.

Jan. 23—Yanukovich holds his 1st direct talks with opposition leaders as 3 protesters are killed in clashes with police.

Jan. 28—Yanukovich agrees to repeal new laws that were rushed through parliament Jan. 16 restricting the right to hold demonstrations. ■

From *Current History's* archives...

“Striking parallels exist between Turkey's present contentious position in Europe's political and security architecture and its historic role in Europe's balance-of-power politics. At once intimate and familiar, foreign and exotic, the Sublime Porte—as the Ottoman Empire was known—and various European chancelleries carried out extensive trade and military cooperation against mutual antagonists without ever fully coming to terms with one another. The Ottomans achieved formal diplomatic entrée into the Concert of Europe with the Treaty of Paris in 1856. This achievement, however, failed to resolve the ‘Eastern Question’ which centered on Ottoman rule over large numbers of Christian subjects in southeastern Europe, Asia Minor, and the Levant.”

Mujeeb R. Khan and M. Hakan Yavuz “Bringing Turkey into Europe,” March 2003

HISTORY IN THE MAKING
100
years
 1914 - 2014