

September 2018

INTERNATIONAL

United Nations

Sept. 25—In an address before the UN General Assembly, US President Donald Trump denounces “globalism” as a threat to national sovereignty and rejects the legitimacy of the International Criminal Court. He has warm words for North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, at whom he leveled threats of nuclear war in his UN speech a year earlier, while denouncing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and the “corrupt dictatorship” in Iran. Trump is surprised by laughter from the audience of world leaders at his boast that his administration “has accomplished more than almost any” in US history.

BRAZIL

Sept. 1—The nation’s highest electoral court rules that former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is serving a 12-year prison sentence for corruption after being convicted in 2017, cannot run for a 3rd term in an October election. Lula was leading in national opinion polls.

Sept. 6—Far-right presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro is stabbed during a campaign appearance in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais and hospitalized in stable condition. He had emerged as the frontrunner in a crowded field after Lula was barred from running, though polls show his support is short of the 50% threshold to avoid a runoff.

Sept. 11—Lulu steps aside as candidate of the Workers’ Party and endorses its decision to name former São Paulo Mayor Fernando Haddad as his replacement.

CHINA

Sept. 22—Ending an impasse that lasted for decades, the Communist government agrees to recognize the authority of the pope to appoint Roman Catholic bishops in China. In return, the Vatican recognizes 7 bishops whom it had previously excommunicated for accepting appointments by the Chinese government. But the agreement does not clarify which side will have the ultimate authority for appointing Chinese bishops. China and the Vatican cut off diplomatic ties in 1951; since then, the government had taken control of the official Catholic hierarchy in China, while many worshipers joined underground churches that were supported by the Vatican. Meanwhile, Chinese Protestant churches have been much faster-growing, with a total of around 100 million members compared with some 12 million Catholics.

ETHIOPIA

Sept. 11—The land border between Ethiopia and Eritrea reopens for the 1st time in 20 years, paving the way for a resumption of trade and allowing divided families to reunite. The neighbors signed a formal declaration of peace in July after a long standoff following a war in 1998–2000.

Sept. 24—The Ethiopian government, responding to rapidly escalating ethnic violence, announces that 1,000s of people have been arrested, and some have been sent to “rehabilitation” camps. Since he took office in April, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has moved quickly to dismantle the repressive policies of his ruling party, releasing political prisoners and lifting bans on opposition groups, including the separatist Oromo Liberation Front.

GERMANY

Sept. 18—Domestic intelligence chief Hans-Georg Maassen is removed from his post and given a new job as senior official in the interior ministry. The compromise move follows a week of

infighting within Chancellor Angela Merkel’s fragile ruling coalition after Maassen had questioned the authenticity of reports of anti-immigrant violence that erupted in late August at a far-right rally in Chemnitz, a city in eastern Germany, after 2 foreigners allegedly killed a local resident. Merkel had blamed the Alternative for Germany party for stirring up the violence against immigrants, citing the Chemnitz rally as a worrisome sign of spreading extremism.

GUATEMALA

Sept. 4—President Jimmy Morales says he will bar Iván Velásquez, a Colombian prosecutor who heads a UN-backed anticorruption commission, from reentering the country to continue his work. Morales Aug. 30 had said he would not renew the commission’s 2-year term after it expires in 2019. The commission has already helped convict a number of Guatemalan politicians on graft charges, including Morales’s predecessor Otto Pérez Molina, and recently uncovered evidence of illegal contributions to Morales’s presidential campaign.

Sept. 16—The Constitutional Court orders the government to allow Velásquez to return, but Morales demands that the UN send a replacement instead.

IRAN

Sept. 22—Militants disguised as soldiers attack a military parade in the southwestern city of Ahvaz, killing 25. It is the deadliest such incident in the country in nearly a decade. The next day, the government in Tehran accuses US-backed enemies in the Persian Gulf region of sponsoring the terrorists.

MALDIVES

Sept. 23—Opposition candidate Ibrahim Mohamed Solih is elected president with more than 58% of the vote, unseating the increasingly authoritarian Abdulla Yameen, who had ordered arrests of opposition leaders and judges while pursuing closer ties with China. Yameen concedes defeat after the election commission declares Solih the winner.

PHILIPPINES

Sept. 25—Opposition figure Antonio Trillanes is arrested on charges of rebellion, becoming the 2nd senator critical of President Rodrigo Duterte’s drug war to be jailed: Leila de Lima has been imprisoned since 2017. Duterte recently revoked the amnesty granted by a previous administration to Trillanes, a former naval officer, for his role in a coup attempt.

SWEDEN

Sept. 9—The governing center-left coalition led by the Social Democrats wins 40.6% of the vote in national elections, edging past a center-right alliance led by the Moderates, which takes 40.2%. The far-right, anti-immigration Sweden Democrats finish 3rd with 17.6% of the vote. Both mainstream blocs have refused to cooperate with the Sweden Democrats, deadlocking talks to form a new government.

SYRIA

Sept. 24—Russian President Vladimir Putin says he has authorized the transfer to the Syrian military of advanced S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, which had previously been withheld in deference to objections from Israel. The move is in response to a recent incursion by Israeli fighter jets into Syrian airspace that Russian officials say led to Syrian air-defense forces inadvertently downing a Russian surveillance plane, killing 15 crew members. ■