

New bishop brings hope to Syria



Syriac Orthodox Patriarch Mar Ignatius Aphrem II (L) stands behind Hasakeh's newly appointed bishop Maurice Amseeh (C) during his inauguration at the Saint George Cathedral in Syria's northeastern city of Hasakeh

Hassake

Syriac Orthodox Christians in Syria's northeastern city of Hasakeh celebrated the inauguration of the community's new bishop on Saturday, four years after the last one left the country.

Six years of conflict have ravaged Syria and displaced more than half of its population, including millions who have become refugees.

Christians in some parts of the country have been particularly targeted by the jihadists of the Islamic State group, who have torn down and desecrated churches and Christian icons.

In the Saint George Cathedral in Hasakeh city, worshippers said Archbishop

Maurice Amseeh's arrival was a sign that their community remained resilient despite the war.

"It's true that many have left, but we're still here, and what happened today is the proof that we're still here in this country and that we will stay," said 23-year-old student Jenny Hakop.

Congregants ululated as Amseeh walked down the aisle, dressed in white and blue robes richly embroidered with gold thread.

"To have a flock without a bishop is difficult, it loses its way," said Georgette, a 37-year-old schoolteacher, expressing the hope that Amseeh would help revitalise the church.

Amseeh's official mandate

extends to the Syriac Orthodox community throughout the Jazeera and Euphrates region, including neighbouring Deir Ezzor province, which remains largely under IS control.

"As soon as Deir Ezzor is freed from terrorism, I will make a blessed trip there to start rebuilding both buildings and people," he said.

Much of Hasakeh province and Hasakeh city are under the control of a Kurdish "autonomous administration" with smaller parts of both controlled by the central government.

Among the pictures and bunting adorning the church exterior on Saturday was a large poster of President Bashar al-Assad. (AFP)

Italy expels Moroccans, Syrian as fears mount

Rome

Italy said yesterday it had deported two Moroccans and a Syrian on security grounds, lifting to 202 the number of potentially dangerous Islamists expelled since January 2015.

The announcement came as security was raised after vehicle attacks in Barcelona and elsewhere, and a widely-reported warning from the Islamic State group that Italy is next on its hit list.

The latest individuals

deported included a 38-year-old Moroccan said to have been radicalised while in prison for minor crimes.

His status was bumped from medium to high risk after he and other prisoners were seen enthusiastically celebrating the Stockholm truck attack.

The Syrian, who also operated under a false Tunisian identity, was arrested in 2015 for involvement in illegal immigration and placed under house arrest at a centre for

asylum seekers in southern Italy. There, he was caught celebrating the attack in May that killed 22 people at a concert in Manchester.

The suspect, whose age was not released, had managed to avoid the fate of two previous expulsion orders issued in 2011. The third man expelled was a 31-year-old Moroccan.

The interior ministry said all three had been flown back to their respective countries of origin.

#PollToday



The Islamic State jihadist group claimed responsibility for attacks in Spain and Russia. Experts, however, are down playing the possibility. Do you believe the attacks have anything to do with IS?

Yes No Cant Say



To me, the economic war with China is everything. And we have to be maniacally focused on that."

Steve Bannon, former chief strategist of the US President

Rest in sight

China snubs 'Little Olympics' ceremony in Taiwan



China boycotted the opening ceremony of the World University Games hosted by Taiwan yesterday.

Two dead in Austria as storm wrecks marquee

Two people were killed in Austria and 120 injured, 20 of them seriously, when an "extreme" storm wrecked a large marquee.

Man stabbed to death in Germany after row: police

One man was killed and another injured in a stabbing following an argument in the western German city of Wuppertal on Friday.

Trumps to skip Kennedy Center arts awards

Donald and Melania Trump will skip festivities for this year's Kennedy Center Honors, one of America's top awards in the arts, to allow the events to go ahead without "political distraction," the White House said yesterday.

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6 dead as militants battle pro-IS group in Philippines



A man cries after seeing the body of his relative, an alleged drug dealer killed during a police anti-drug operation, in Manila

Datu Salibo

The Philippines' largest Muslim militant group has launched a deadly offensive against a splinter faction that has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, police said yesterday.

The fighting between the two groups began about two weeks ago in the marshy farmlands around the southern town of Datu Salibo on Mindanao island, regional police spokeswoman Tara Leah Cuyco said.

Clashes between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front

(MILF) and its offshoot, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), took place on Friday and Saturday, with six fighters from the original group killed.

"The MILF is trying to force the BIFF out of the area. They do not want any trouble," Chief Inspector Cuyco said.

A MILF guerrilla leader told a video journalist working for AFP on Saturday: "We do not want them here. It's an order from the higher-ups."

South Korean arrested for duping Thais into sex trade

Bangkok

A South Korean man accused of duping over 20 Thai women into forced prostitution in his home country has been arrested in Bangkok, an officer said yesterday.

Kim Hyoung Joon, 39, is believed to be part of a transnational gang funnelling Thai women into the sex trade in South Korea, and his arrest follows efforts by Bangkok and Seoul to dismantle the group.

Thai police said Joon promised women jobs as masseuses in South Korea.

But upon their arrival they

were instead forced into sex work by pimps who seized their passports and blocked any attempts at escape.

"More than 20 women have been lured by this gang over the past two to three years," said Songsak Raksaksakul, the deputy director of Thailand's Department of Special Investigations (DSI).

"Most of the victims are between 25 and 40 years old," he added. "Pimps monitored them all the time."

Joon was arrested at his Bangkok apartment on Thursday and charged with human trafficking.

Nigeria's Buhari home after 100-day treatment in London

Abuja

Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari returned home on Saturday after spending more than 100 days in London receiving treatment for an undisclosed illness.

His plane touched down around 4:35 pm (1535 GMT) at the international airport in Abuja, an AFP correspondent said.

Wearing a black caftan with a cap to match, the

74-year-old left the aircraft unaided and was met by Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and other senior government officials, including ministers, security chiefs and state governors.

He took a salute to the military guard of honour before he was driven in a convoy to the presidential villa. An enthusiastic crowd of supporters were at the airport and lined the roads to welcome Buhari back.