

## World News Roundup

## Indonesia

## Process seen complex

## Ex-bombmaker &amp; Bali widow forge friendship, seek peace

TENGGULUN, Indonesia, Dec 28, (AP) — The Balinese widow stared across the courthouse at the man who had murdered her husband and 201 others and longed to see him suffer.

Ever since that horrible night, when she realized amid the blackened body parts that the father of her two little boys was dead, Ni Luh Erniati's rage at the men behind the bombing had eaten away at her. She wanted everyone associated with the 2002 attack on the Indonesian island of Bali to be executed by firing squad. And she wanted to be the one to pull the trigger.

She lunged toward defendant Amrozi Nurhasyim before others pulled her back, halting her bid for vengeance.

What would happen a decade later between her and Amrozi's brother — the man who had taught Amrozi how to make bombs — was unthinkable in that moment. Unthinkable that they would make a delicate attempt at reconciliation.

The practice of reconciling former terrorists and victims is rare and, to some, abhorrent. Yet it is gaining attention in Indonesia, which is grappling with Islamic extremism.

Last year, Indonesia's government brought together dozens of former Islamic militants and victims for what was billed as a reconciliation conference. The results were mixed, and the idea viewed by many as radical.



Erniati

## Terrorists

More quietly, over the past several years, there has been a growing alliance of former terrorists and victims brought together under the guidance of a group founded by the victim of a terrorist attack. Since 2013, 49 victims and six former extremists have reconciled through the Alliance for a Peaceful Indonesia, or AIDA. They have visited around 150 schools in parts of Indonesia known as hotbeds for extremist recruiters, sharing their stories with more than 8,000 students.

The hope is that if former terrorists and victims can learn to see each other as human, they can stop the cycle of vengeance.

Those behind this peacebuilding effort would never argue that it can turn every terrorist and heal every victim. The process is extraordinarily complex. Yet much can be gained from victims and perpetrators learning to understand each other, says Brunilda Pali, a board member of the European Forum for Restorative Justice. Understanding someone, she cautions, does not mean legitimizing what they've done.

For Erniati, there was nothing at first to understand. How could she possibly understand something so horrific?

As Erniati searched for answers, Ali Fauzi searched his soul.

The Bali bombings, which targeted Western tourists at a nightclub and nearby pub, were carried out by al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic militant group Jemaah Islamiyah. Though Fauzi was the group's chief bombmaking instructor, and though three of his brothers helped orchestrate the attack, Fauzi says he knew nothing of the plot.

His brothers, Amrozi, Ali Imron and Ali Ghufron — who often went by the alias Mukhlas — were charged with the attack, along with several other Jemaah Islamiyah members. Fauzi was never charged, but spent months in police detention in Jakarta. It was there that the kindness of a police officer began to chip away at his convictions about people he had long seen as the enemy.

Yet it wasn't until years later, when he met a Dutch man named Max Boon, that Fauzi truly understood the horror of his life's work.

Boon was severely injured during a 2009 suicide bombing in Jakarta. Police suspected the attack had been orchestrated by Jemaah Islamiyah.

The attack hadn't shaken Boon's faith in the goodness of humans. He believed that had the bomber met him, he might have realized Boon wasn't his enemy.

## Violent

Boon threw himself into peacebuilding efforts. Fauzi, meanwhile, was working to help deradicalize violent extremists. The pair met in 2013 at a terrorism awareness conference.

As Fauzi listened to Boon talk about peace, his heart cracked. That Boon could forgive those who had caused him such pain rocked Fauzi to his core.

Boon had already been planning a project in which terrorism victims would share their stories with students in areas targeted by extremist recruiters. Fauzi agreed to help, and to meet other victims.

Which is how Erniati found herself sitting with Fauzi in a meeting arranged by AIDA. His grin enraged her.

As Erniati began to tell her story, Fauzi felt anguish. The image of Erniati searching for her husband at the blast site, of her struggles to raise their sons alone, was unbearable.

Fauzi wished he could erase everything he'd ever known about bombs.

"I'm sorry," he said, weeping. "I'm very sorry." Erniati felt something shift within her. Fauzi was in pain, just as she was.

What he said meant less to her than what he felt. To Erniati, apologies are just words. But the ability to understand another person's suffering, she says, goes to the core of who you are.

Her anger began to lift. Over the next few years, Erniati and Fauzi grew closer. They visited schools with AIDA, sharing their story of reconciliation. Fauzi started a foundation to help deradicalize extremists.

The victims in AIDA's programs are all voluntary, Boon says. The foundation also carefully vets the former extremists who join to ensure they have truly reformed.

Fauzi acknowledges that reconciliation wouldn't work for everyone. "I realize that humans are different from one another," he says. "So it's not easy to take their hearts as a whole."

Today, he and Erniati are close friends. Fauzi still wrestles with guilt, but Erniati's acceptance of him has lessened the sting.

Erniati continues to meet with former militants. She hopes her story can put them on the right path. Her sadness returns on occasion. But her anger is gone.

During a visit to Fauzi's village, she pauses near the gravesite of Amrozi and Mukhlas, both executed in 2008. Someday, she says, she would like to place flowers on their graves and send up a prayer. Because if God can forgive them, even if she can't, then maybe their spirits can help bring the world what Fauzi's friendship helped bring her: peace.



A civilian who was wounded in the suicide car bomb attack is held to be taken to hospital in Mogadishu, Somalia on Dec 28. (AP)

## Truck bomb in Somalia's capital kills at least 76 people

A truck bomb exploded at a busy security checkpoint in Somalia's capital Saturday morning, killing at least 76 people including many students, authorities said. It was one of the deadliest attacks in Mogadishu in recent memory, and witnesses said the force of the blast reminded them of the devastating 2017 bombing that killed hundreds.

The toll could rise as scores of people were rushed to hospitals, government spokesman Ismail Mukhtar told The As-

sociated Press. Dr Mohamed Yusuf, director of Madina hospital, said they had received 73 bodies.

The Aamin Ambulance service reported at least 76 dead and more than 50 wounded.

Most of those killed were university and other students returning to class, Mayor Omar Mohamud Mohamed said at the scene. Two Turkish brothers were among the dead, Somalia's foreign minister said.

Police Capt Mohamed Hussein said the blast targeted a tax collection center during the morning rush hour as Somalia returned to work after its weekend. A large black plume of smoke rose above the capital.

Images showed the mangled frames of vehicles and bodies lying on the ground. At a hospital, families and friends picked through dozens of bodies. "I saw many dead bodies lying on

the ground," witness Mohamed Abdi Hakim said. "Some of those dead were police officers, but most of them were students."

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. The al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabab often carries out such attacks. The extremist group was pushed out of Mogadishu several years ago but continues to target high-profile areas such as checkpoints and hotels in the seaside city. (AP)

## Japan

## 30- to 40-year completion target

## Japan revises Fukushima cleanup plan

TOKYO, Dec 28, (AP) — Japan on Friday revised a roadmap for the cleanup of the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant, further delaying the removal of thousands of spent fuel units that remain in cooling pools since the 2011 disaster. It's a key step in the decades-long process, complicated by high radiation and other risks. The government and the plant operator, Tokyo Electric Power Co, are keeping a 30- to 40-year completion target.

A look at some of the challenges: **MORE THAN 4,700 UNITS OF FUEL IN POOLS**

More than 4,700 units of fuel rods remain at the three melted reactors and two others that survived the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. They pose a high risk because their storage pools are uncovered and a loss of water in case of another major disaster could cause the fuel rods to melt, releasing massive radiation. Their removal at Units 1 and 2, after repeated delays, is now postponed by up to 10 years from the initial target of 2018, with more preparation needed to reduce radiation and clear debris and other risks.

Fuel rod removal at the Unit 1 reactor pool will begin sometime in 2027-2028, after debris is cleaned up and a huge rooftop cover installed to contain radioactive dust. Fuel removal at Unit 2 pool is to begin in 2024-2026. Work at the Unit 3 reactor pool began in April 2019 and all 566 units will be removed by March 2021. TEPCO has emptied the pool at Unit 4, which was offline and only suffered building damage, and aims to have all remain-

ing rods in reactor pools removed by 2031 for safer storage in dry casks.

**771.2 MILLION TONS OF RADIOACTIVE WATER**

TEPCO has been unable to release the 1.2 million tons of treated but still radioactive water kept in nearly 1,000 tanks at the plant, fearing public repercussions and the impact on the area's struggling fishing and agriculture. The amount of water is growing by 170 tons daily because it is used to cool the melted fuel inside the reactors.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry recently drafted a proposal to release the water to the sea or the air, or a combination of both. TEPCO says it can only store up to 1.37 million tons, or until the summer of 2022. Time is limited because preparation is needed before any water release, TEPCO and the government say the tanks pose risks if they were to spill their contents in another major earthquake, tsunami or flood. They also need to free up space to build storage for melted fuel removed from reactors beginning 2021.

## Treatment

The water is still somewhat contaminated, but TEPCO says further treatment can remove all but radioactive tritium to levels allowed for release. Experts say tritium is not harmful to humans in small amounts and has been routinely released from nuclear plants around the world.

**880 TONS OF MELTED FUEL**  
Removing an estimated 880 tons of molten fuel from Fukushima's three

melted reactors is the toughest and unprecedented challenge. It's six times the amount dealt with in the aftermath of the 1979 Three Mile Island partial core melt in the United States.

Removal is to begin in 2021 at Unit 2, where robotic probes have made more progress than at Units 1 and 3. A robotic arm was developed to enter the reactor from the side to reach the melted fuel, which has largely fallen to the bottom of the primary containment vessel. A side entry would allow the simultaneous removal of fuel rods in the pool from the reactor's top. The removal of melted fuel will begin with just a spoonful, which will be carefully measured and analyzed under International Atomic Energy Agency instructions. The government hopes to gradually expand the scale of the removal, though further expertise and robotic development is needed. The first decade through 2031 is a crucial phase that will affect future progress. Units 1 and 3 fell behind due to high radiation and water levels respectively, requiring more investigation.

Japan has yet to develop a plan to dispose of the highly radioactive melted fuel and other debris that come out of the reactors. TEPCO will compile a plan for those after the first decade of melted fuel removal. Managing the waste will require new technologies to reduce its volume and toxicity. TEPCO and the government say they plan to build a site to store waste and debris removed from the reactors, but finding one and obtaining public consent will be difficult.



An undercover policeman points a can of pepper spray as others detain a protester during a demonstration at a shopping mall popular with traders from mainland China near the Chinese border in Hong Kong on Dec 28. (AP)



Lam



Jong Un

## Asia

**HK protesters ignite tension:** Police fought with protesters who marched through a Hong Kong shopping mall Saturday demanding mainland Chinese traders leave the territory in a fresh weekend of anti-government tension.

The protest in Sheung Shui, near Hong Kong's boundary with the mainland, was part of efforts to pressure the government by disrupting economic activity.

About 100 protesters marched through the mall shouting, "Liberate Hong Kong!" and "Return to the mainland!"

Police in civilian clothes with clubs tacked and handcuffed some protesters. One officer fired pepper spray at protesters and reporters. Government broadcaster RTHK reported 14 people were detained.

Some shoppers argued with police in olive fatigues and helmets who blocked walkways in the mall.

Protests that began in June over a proposed extradition law have spread to include demands for more democracy and other grievances.

The proposed law was withdrawn but protesters want the resignation of the territory's leader, Carrie Lam, and other changes.

Protesters complain Beijing and Lam's government are eroding the autonomy and Western-style civil liberties promised to Hong Kong when the former British colony returned to China in 1997.

On Saturday, some merchants in the Sheung Shui mall wrapped orange tape around kiosks or partially closed security doors in shops but most business went ahead normally.

Hong Kong, which has no sales tax and a reputation for genuine products, is popular with Chinese traders who buy merchandise to resell on the mainland. (AP)

**US base blares false alarm:** A US military base in South Korea accidentally blared an alert siren instead of a bugle call, causing a brief scare just as the US and its allies are monitoring for signs of provocation from North Korea, which has warned

it could send a "Christmas gift" over deadlocked nuclear negotiations.

The siren at Camp Casey, which is near the border with North Korea, went off by "human error" at around 10 p.m. Thursday, said Lt Col Martyn Crighton, a public affairs officer for the 2nd Infantry Division.

The operator immediately identified the mistake and alerted all units at the base of the false alarm, which did not interfere with any operations, Crighton said in an email Saturday.

The incident came a day before Japanese broadcaster NHK caused panic by mistak-



Vendors selling winter clothing wait for customers in New Delhi, India on Dec 28. Extreme cold and foggy conditions continued in the national capital on Saturday with the mercury recording a minimum temperature of 2.4 degrees, the lowest for the season so far. The capital has been under a cold spell since mid-December and is expected to witness its second-coldest December since 1901, according to the weather office. (AP)

enly sending a news alert saying North Korea fired a missile over Japan that landed in the sea off the country's northeastern island of Hokkaido early Friday. The broadcaster apologized, saying the alert was for media training purposes.

North Korea has been dialing up pressure on Washington ahead of an end-of-year deadline issued by leader Kim Jong Un for the Trump administration to offer mutually acceptable terms for a nuclear deal.

There are concerns that Pyongyang could do something provocative if Washington doesn't back down and relieve sanctions imposed on the North's broken economy. (AP)

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**Thai navy SEAL dies:** A Thai navy SEAL who was part of the dramatic rescue of 12 boys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave has died of a blood infection contracted during the risky operation, the Royal Thai Navy said.

Petty Officer 1st Class Bayroot Pakbara was receiving treatment but his condition worsened after the infection spread into his blood, according to an announcement on the Thai navy SEAL's Facebook page.

He is the second navy diver who lost his life in the high-profile operation that saw the boys and the coach extracted from deep inside the northern cave complex, where they were trapped for two weeks in June-July last year.

Lt Cmdr Saman Gunan died while resupplying oxygen tanks on July 6, 2018. (AP)