

Locked up for being different: Switzerland's 'dark chapter'

GENEVA: A pregnant teenage runaway, a former foster care child, an adolescent boy raped by priests: for decades, these were the kinds of people Switzerland locked up as "undesirables". There was no trial, no appeal and officials running the "administrative detention" centres decided when people should be released. Many suffered physical and sexual abuse and some were even sterilized. Some 60,000 people considered "deviant" by the Swiss authorities were locked up over the course of the 20th century.

The practice peaked in Switzerland in the 1930s but was still legal as late as 1981. "It is a dark chapter, a chapter that cannot be justified," said Markus Notter, president of a commission of experts - the CIE - appointed by the government in 2014 to investigate the scandal. It has been releasing the results of its research since the beginning of this year, with a final report due out in September. The commission's findings show how hundreds of detention centres around the country used arbitrary powers as an instrument of social control, to enforce social norms.

Hubert Meyer, now 72, struggles to tell his story. As a child he was repeatedly raped by priests. Later, as a teenager, he was placed in administrative detention on several occasions, as his "effeminate" behavior was considered inappropriate. "They said that I naturally lacked virility and was unstable," he told AFP. After he was caught masturbating, he was sent to a closed psychiatric unit and given drugs to "cure" him.

Administrative detention affected people over the age of 16, and most of those held under the system were adults, according to the CIE. Switzerland has already acknowledged the wrongs done to many children caught up in a similar system from the mid-19th century to as late as the early 1980s. They were removed from families considered to be lacking "traditional social and moral values". What both policies had in common was that they tended to target poor communities.

There was a certain disdain felt towards the lower classes, said CIE vice president Anne-Francoise Praz. They were "considered partly responsible for their problems", she explained. In legal texts cited by the CIE, detentions were justified with expressions such as "giving oneself over to misbehavior or



CAZIS, Switzerland: This handout picture shows archeologists working on graves, part of a total of 103 graves dating from the 19th and 20th centuries discovered during the construction of the Realta new penitentiary building. — AFP

laziness" or simply "alcoholic". Once labelled, people were sent to one of 648 forced labor, education or correctional centres according to a CIE count - and often more than once. Psychiatric and prison centres were also used.

Some suffered sexual abuse or beatings and some were even sterilized, according to the findings of the CIE. A study in May revealed that some skeletal remains exhumed near a correctional centre in eastern Switzerland had broken ribs - suggesting abuse.

The centres were also used as a source of unpaid labor. Daniel Cevey, 76, told AFP he spent his childhood in foster care, and was later placed in administrative detention. He never found out why. He was forced to do farm work like picking potatoes. "We were never paid," he said. "All those years, we went to the fields instead of

going to school." Many of those detained were sucked into the system at a young age. Ursula Biondi had a rough childhood with a violent father, she told AFP. Then, aged just 15, she was repeatedly raped by the father of the family where she worked as a nanny.

When she was 17, she fell in love and the couple ran away to Italy. But after she became pregnant, she was forced back to Switzerland and in 1966 was detained for a year at a women's prison in the central town of Hindelbank. She gave birth to her son in prison and he was immediately taken away from her. It took months of fighting to get him back, she said.

The experience "traumatized me for life," said Biondi, now 69. For decades she was silent about her ordeals, but then she started campaigning - and for the past 20 years she has been fighting to get justice for

victims of the system. And she can celebrate several victories. In 2010, the justice ministry presented an official state apology to former detainees. In 2014, parliament acknowledged for the first time that those detained had done nothing wrong and had suffered an injustice.

Former detainees each received compensation of 25,000 Swiss francs (\$26,000). For many this is far too little. A lot of former detainees live living in poverty: As well as the trauma they suffered, their detention robbed them of a proper education or training, making it harder to find work. "For those still living in precarity, this is a slap in the face," Biondi said of the compensation. And those responsible "have never faced any legal consequences", lamented Cevey. "It is a scandal that is continuing." — AFP

Assembly position on Palestine...

Continued from Page 1

"The Zionist entity wants us to forget about this issue. But this will never happen. It is true that the

Tunisia player shining a path...

Continued from Page 1

It's very tough to be a pro when you come from Tunisia, but I'm trying to give the message that if I can do it they can do it. I can say that from my country there is a lot of talent and I hope that I can give my experiences to others."

Jabeur, whose favorite growing up was Andy Roddick because "he was good looking and funny" has a tenacious game suited to grass and wears a smile on the tennis court. "When I smile I play my best tennis," she said. Earlier this week she bamboozled British number one and former Wimbledon semi-finalist Johanna Konta at the Eastbourne tournament on her way to the semifinals where she had to withdraw with an ankle injury before playing Angelique Kerber.

Considering there are no grass courts in Tunisia and

military balance is not in our favor for the time being, but in line with Islamic sharia, we learn that our occupied Arab and Islamic territories will be liberated sooner or later. As Muslims, we are well aware of this undeniable promise," Ghanem said. The municipality of Silvit in the West Bank on Thursday staged a rally and hoisted the Kuwaiti flag side by side with the Palestinian flag on a street named after Marzouq Al-Ghanem. The good gesture is an expression of gratitude to Kuwait for its constant support of the Palestinian cause. — KUNA

she once won the French Open junior title on clay, it is perhaps surprising she enjoys the lawns, although she says her varied game allows her to be creative. "The only grass in Tunis is in the football stadium," she joked. "But I love it, it gives me chances with my slice and drop shots and my ball goes very good and smooth with grass."

A confessed lover of strawberries and cream she won her first match at Wimbledon last year before losing a tight three-setter to Katerina Siniakova. "I was always at Roehampton trying in qualifiers and the first time I actually got to Wimbledon (in 2017) I felt like I had really earned it. I was in the locker room thinking what an amazing place this is."

Jabeur, who last year became the first Arab to reach a WTA final at the Kremlin Cup, hopes one day to start an academy for young Tunisians with a dream to play tennis. "There were many difficulties, the structure is bad and we don't have the knowledge, but thank God I had a small talent and had the right people to show me the path," she said. "I remember when I was a kid and I said I wanted to win the French Open when I grow up, people just laughed. I hope children can watch me and think it's possible." — Reuters

Pompeo told reporters shortly before departing South Korea that a fresh round of talks will likely happen "sometime in July" and the North's negotiators would be foreign ministry diplomats. Pompeo made clear in a tweet later that the United States believed that sanctions put in place under UN Security Council resolutions needed to remain in place as talks moved forward. "We remain ready to engage (North Korea) in negotiations, but remain firm on the implementation of UNSCRs ahead of denuclearization," he said.

Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, said the meeting between the two leaders was important in reviving working-level talks. "But the North wouldn't easily change its stance, even though Trump has effectively responded to the so-called top-down approach cherished by Kim," he said. Trump said he had "plenty of time" and was in "no rush" to reach a deal. "We want to get it right," he said.

North Korea has pursued nuclear and missile programs for years in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, and easing tensions with North Korea is one of the US president's top foreign policy priorities. The DMZ was set up after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armistice, not a truce, leaving North Korea and the United States still technically at war.

Soo Kim, a former CIA analyst now with RAND Corporation, said the North's "gravitational force has pulled Trump across the DMZ", calling it an "alluring elixir of wile, threatening rhetoric, stalling, and dangling of the remote possibility of resuming dialogue". Such a meeting has long been sought by the North, but "Kim didn't have to lift a finger to get Trump to cross the DMZ", she added. "It was, in all appearances, by Trump's volition." "This was a great day," the US president said before flying out on Air Force One. "This was a very legendary, very historic day." — Agencies

US envoys on hand as Israel digs...

Continued from Page 1

Israel captured Silwan and neighboring districts in the 1967 conflict, annexed and settled them, angering foreign powers that back the Palestinians' goal of building a capital there for a future state taking in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. "Some people, not necessarily friends of ours, are obsessing about my being here," Friedman said at the ceremony, adding the excavation project uncovered "the truth, whether you believe or not ... the truth is the only foundation upon which peace will come to this area".

After his speech, Friedman, along with Greenblatt, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife Sara and donors to the project, wielded hammers to break through a wall and open the subterranean path to the holy site revered by Jews as the Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. In a statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said it "views the American attendance at and celebration of the Judaization activities in occupied East Jerusalem as hostile acts against the Palestinians". "The administration of President Donald Trump proves day by day its ... unlimited affiliation to the colonial settlement project led by the extremist right in the state of the occupation (Israel)," it said.

Emek Shaveh, an Israeli group that opposes the "politicization" of archaeology, also condemned the planned American presence, calling it "a political act which is the closest the US will have come to recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Old City basin of Jerusalem".

Greenblatt dismissed accusations the event was a fur-

ther acknowledgement of Israeli sovereignty over east Jerusalem. The Palestinian Authority "claims our attendance at this historic event supports 'Judaization' of Jerusalem/is an act of hostility vs. Palestinians. Ludicrous," he wrote on Twitter. "We can't 'Judaize' what history/archaeology show. We can acknowledge it & you can stop pretending it isn't true! Peace can only be built on truth."

Breaking with long-standing US policy and international consensus, US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in Dec 2017. He left open the possibility of a future Palestinian foothold there under a negotiated peace deal. Israeli-Palestinian peace talks have been stalled since 2014 and the future of Jerusalem has long been at the centre of the Middle East conflict.

The recognition has prompted the Palestinians to snub a Trump administration they accuse of bias on behalf of Israel, which counts all of the city holy to Jews, Christians and Muslims as its indivisible capital - a status not recognized abroad. Palestinian officials boycotted a US-led conference in Bahrain last week which Washington said was meant to lay the economic foundations for peace with Israel.

Friedman, asked in a Jerusalem Post interview published yesterday if he saw Israel one day agreeing to Palestinian control of Silwan as part of a peace deal, said: "It would be akin to America returning the Statue of Liberty." In addition to Jerusalem, Palestinians fret that Washington will give a green light to a possible move by Israel to annex Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Greenblatt told a Jerusalem conference sponsored by the conservative Israel Hayom conference last week that diplomatic progress might be possible "if people stop pretending (Israeli) settlements - or what I like to call neighborhoods and cities - are the reason for the lack of peace". — Agencies

Mass protests for civilian rule...

Continued from Page 1

Police also fired tear gas at protesters in the northern Khartoum district of Bahri and in Mamura and Arkweit, in the capital's east, as thousands of protesters chanted "Civilian rule! Civilian rule!", witnesses said.

Elsewhere, security forces used tear gas to disperse protesters in the capital's twin city of Omdurman and the eastern town of Gadaref. The latest demonstrations come at a time when Ethiopia and the African Union (AU) are jointly mediating between the protesters and generals. The European Union, several Western nations and rights groups called on the generals to avoid any violence.

Men and women flashing victory signs and carrying Sudanese flags flooded the streets of Al-Sahafa neighborhood of Khartoum. "We are here for the martyrs of the (June 3) sit-in. We want a civilian state that guarantees our freedom. We want to get rid of military dictatorship," said Zeinab, 23, as onlookers cheered and motorists honked horns. "No one gave a mandate to the military council, all the people are against the council," said another protester who shouted out: "I'm the next martyr."

Marchers also passed by the homes of those killed on June 3. Others chanting "Blood for blood, we don't want compensation" took to the streets of the Jabra district, while rallies were also under way in other neighborhoods of the capital. On the road to airport, security forces moved to block off crowds of demon-

strators, an AFP correspondent reported. Thousands also protested in the cities of Port Sudan, Al-Obied, Madani and Khasma el-Girba, witnesses said.

The feared paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) were deployed in pick-up trucks mounted with machineguns in several Khartoum squares and many shops stayed shut. RSF chief General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo had warned he would not tolerate any "vandalism" at the protests. "There are vandals, there are people who have an agenda, a hidden agenda, we don't want problems," Dagalo, who is also the ruling military council's deputy chief, said Saturday.

In the run-up to the protest many Sudanese said they feared new violence. "I expect large numbers... and it's very possible that security forces will use force," said Mustafa, 25. Another demonstrator, Talal, 29, said: "Even if only a few rallies take place in Khartoum, they will break the barrier of fear and more people will take to the streets" in coming days.

About 130 people have been killed since the crackdown, the majority of them on that day, according to doctors close to the alliance. The health ministry says 61 people died nationwide on June 3. The military council insists it did not order the dispersal of the sit-in, but acknowledged "excesses" after orders were given to purge a nearby area allegedly notorious for drug peddling. The council has warned it would hold the alliance "entirely responsible if any soul is lost" in yesterday's protests.

Tensions remain high since the June 3 raid, which followed the collapse of talks over who should lead a new governing body - a civilian or soldier. Ethiopia and the AU have proposed a blueprint for a civilian-majority body, which the generals say could be a basis for resuming talks. Protesters had initially gathered at the military headquarters to seek the army's support in ousting Bashir. — AFP