

International

Children in quake-hit Syria learn in buses turned into classrooms

Traveling classrooms service more than 3,000 children at some 27 camps

JINDAYRIS, Syria: In a dusty Syrian camp for earthquake survivors, school pupils line up and wait for a colorful bus to pull up. Since the disaster hit, they go to a classroom on wheels. School bags on their backs and notebooks in hand, the children took off their shoes before entering the bus, then sat down along rows of desks fitted inside. A teacher greeted them in the mobile classroom, decorated with curtains bearing children's designs, before they broke into a song for their English class.

The February 6 quake killed nearly 6,000 people in Syria, many of them in the war-torn country's rebel-held northwest, and also left tens of thousands dead in Turkey. The Syrian town of Jindayris, in Aleppo province near the Turkish border, was among the worst hit, with homes destroyed and school buildings either levelled or turned into shelters.

"We were living in Jindayris and the earthquake happened... and then we didn't have homes anymore," said 10-year-old Jawaher Hilal, a light pink headscarf covering her hair. "We came to live here and the school was very far away," said the fifth-grader now staying with her family at the displacement camp on the outskirts of town. As relief services were set up, she told AFP, "the buses came here and we started

to study and learn. The buses are really nice, they teach us a lot."

The traveling classrooms are a project of the non-profit Orange Organization and service more than 3,000 children at some 27 camps, said education officer Raad Al-Abd. "The mobile classrooms offer educational services as well as psychological support to children who were affected by the quake," he said.

'Desperate conditions'

More than three months after the quake, 3.7 million children in Syria "continue to face desperate conditions and need humanitarian assistance", says the United Nations children's agency UNICEF. "Almost 1.9 million children have had their education disrupted, with many schools still being used as shelters," it added in a statement this month.

In northwest Syria alone, "a minimum of 452 primary and secondary schools" were reportedly damaged to varying degrees, the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said weeks ago. "More than 1 million school-aged children need education support and are at risk of being out of school," it said, adding that at least 25,000 teachers are also in need of help, including "mental health and psychosocial support".

On another bus, boys and girls en-



JINDAYRIS: Pupils board a bus turned into a traveling classroom reaching children left homeless and school-less at a camp for internally displaced persons following a devastating earthquake more than three months ago. — AFP

thusiastically interacted with the teacher, balloons hanging from the ceiling, for lessons that included Arabic, math and science. Outside in the bare dirt, children sang in a circle and clapped along with

the educators. As the buses left, pulling out through the road running between the camps' tents, adjacent structures and trees, the children yelled out and waved goodbye. Jawaher's father Ramadan Hilal

expressed relief and gratitude for the initiative. "After the earthquake there were no more schools or anything else," he said. "Even though they wanted to establish schools, they are far away." — AFP

FBI files uncover plot to kill Queen

LONDON: A newly released cache of FBI files has revealed a potential plot to assassinate Queen Elizabeth II during her 1983 visit to California. The possible threat followed a phone call made by "a man who claimed that his daughter had been killed in Northern Ireland by a rubber bullet", according to the document that also refers to a bar frequented by Irish Republican Army (IRA) sympathizers.

The queen and her husband Prince Philip visited the west coast of the United States in February and

March 1983, and the trip passed off without incident. Four years earlier in 1979, IRA paramilitaries opposed to British rule in Northern Ireland killed Louis Mountbatten, the last colonial governor of India and an uncle of Philip, in a bomb attack.

The file states that the man claimed he was going to attempt to harm the queen "by dropping some object off the Golden Gate Bridge onto the royal yacht Britannia when it sails underneath". Alternatively he "would attempt to kill Queen Elizabeth when she visited Yosemite National Park", they added. A separate file among the documents, dated 1989, pointed out that while the FBI was unaware of any specific threats against the queen, "the possibility of threats against the British monarchy is ever present from the Irish Republican Army". The queen, who died last

September aged 96, has previously been reported to have been the target of other assassination plots.

In 1970, suspected IRA sympathizers unsuccessfully attempted to derail her train west of Sydney, while in 1981 the IRA tried to bomb her on a visit to Shetland, off the northeast coast of Scotland. In the same year, a mentally disturbed teenager fired a single shot towards the queen's car during a visit to New Zealand. Christopher Lewis fired a single shot as she toured the South Island city of Dunedin.

The botched attempt was covered up by police at the time and only came to light in 2018 when New Zealand's Security Intelligence Service (SIS) spy agency released documents following a media request. Also in 1981, another teenager fired six blanks at her during the monarch's Trooping

the Colour birthday parade in central London. The queen quickly calmed her startled horse and carried on while the teenager told soldiers who dismissed him he had "wanted to be famous".

The following year, in one of the most famous security breaches of her reign, Michael Fagan managed to get into the queen's bedroom and spent 10 minutes talking to her before she could raise the alarm. The unemployed decorator had a few drinks and scaled the walls of Buckingham Palace, climbing up a drainpipe to enter the queen's London residence. He wandered into her bedroom and reportedly sat on the end of the bed for a chat with the perturbed monarch before a palace staffer lured him away with the promise of a shot of whisky. — AFP

US cop suspended after shooting 11-year-old boy

WASHINGTON: A police officer in the southern US state of Mississippi has been suspended after shooting an 11-year-old boy while responding to a domestic disturbance. Aderrien Murry, who is black, was shot once in the chest and suffered a collapsed lung, fractured ribs and a lacer-

ated liver, the boy's mother, Nakala Murry, told CNN. Police officials told AFP Friday they are investigating the incident.

Murry said her son, who has since been released from hospital, was shot by an African American police officer, who responded to a domestic violence call from the family on Saturday. Murry said she asked Aderrien to call police after the "irate" father of another one of her children turned up at the family home around 4:00 am.

Murry said an officer arrived with his gun drawn and asked those inside the home to come out. Her son was shot as

he entered the living room with his hands up, she told CNN. "Once he came from around the corner, he got shot," Murry said. "I cannot grasp why." She said her son "kept asking, 'Why did he shoot me? What did I do wrong?'"

The Mississippi Bureau of Investigation told AFP on Friday that it is "currently assessing this critical incident and gathering evidence." "Upon completing the investigation, agents will share their findings with the Attorney General's Office," it said.

Carlos Moore, an attorney for the Murry family, said the police officer, Greg

Capers, has been suspended pending an investigation. "Aderrien Murry is blessed to be home and alive," Moore said in a statement. "No child should ever be subjected to such violence at the hands of those who are sworn to protect and serve." "We cannot continue to tolerate a system that allows police officers to use deadly force with impunity."

Indianola is a predominantly African American town of nearly 10,000 residents in the Mississippi Delta. According to a Washington Post database, 407 people have been shot and killed by police in the United States this year. — AFP



INDIANOLA, Mississippi: Aderrien Murry, 11, is seen with family attorney Carlos Moore after Murry was shot May 20, 2023. — AFP

After mass killings, thousands in need of aid in Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria: Calls for aid increased on Friday for thousands of people displaced by violence that erupted two weeks ago in central Nigeria's Plateau State, killing at least 170 according to a local official. Police gave a lower death toll of 87 and said the situation was calm, in response to reports that tensions remained high after the initial attack on May 15. The crisis is just one of the many security challenges facing President-elect Bola Tinubu who takes the helm of Africa's most populous nation on Monday.

It remains unclear what triggered the attacks in Plateau's Mangu district, but tit-for-tat killings between herders and farmers often spiral into village raids by heavily armed gangs. The National Emergency Management Agency said last week that more than 3,600 people were displaced, over 720 houses partially or completely destroyed and at least 216 people had been injured. On Friday, the Nigerian Red Cross said that at least 1,000 households have fled from their villages. Yohana Danladi, local Red

Cross representative in Plateau State, said that some areas "have not received any support from the government so far, they are just helped by relatives."

After a visit to the area, the UN chief in Nigeria Matthias Schmale said that "affected people and especially women and children are both traumatized and have immediate humanitarian needs such as food, water and dignity/sanitation kits." "While hoping the violence will now end quickly, I urge the concerned authorities to move swiftly to address immediate needs," Schmale told AFP in an email.

Since the initial attack, "almost every day, we still record dead bodies," Mangu district chairman Daput Minister Daniel told AFP. "I cannot give you specific numbers because they increase on daily basis," he said, adding that as of Thursday "the number was above 170". Speaking to AFP on Friday, police spokesman Alfred Alabo could not confirm that death toll.

'We suddenly heard gunshots'

Peter Lagai and Lydia John Hirse were among those who survived and are now sheltering at a school with others. When the attackers stormed his village of Kubat, Lagai said he ran into hiding. "We suddenly heard gunshots... we were so worried," he told AFP, adding that his brother Matthew was shot. "He died instantly. Some of us sustained injuries, the house was burnt down." — AFP

government — to provide safe bike lanes." Municipal Councilmember Fahad Al-Abduljader called on authorities to speed up the process of allocating bicycle lanes in Kuwait, which could help prevent similar accidents. He said the interior ministry, public works ministry and Kuwait Municipality have a shared responsibility to implement bicycle lanes, which have been approved by the Municipal Council. "We cannot stay silent when people's safety is on the line," he said in a statement on Friday.

Bicycle accidents are very common in Kuwait as the country lacks the proper infrastructure for safe cycling, such as bike lanes or bicycle tracks. In 2021, Kuwait banned cycling on Jaber Causeway, a popular destination for bikers in the country, after an accident left one biker dead and another injured.

"The lack of bicycle lanes in Kuwait poses a big challenge for us as cyclists, besides the lack of people's awareness about cyclists' safety and security," Batoul Al-Abdullah, a cyclist who is a member of Bike Mate team, told Kuwait Times last week. "This puts us at high risk of accidents and danger."

Mol: Body of missing citizen...

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The suspect initially denied any involvement, but after the body was found, he confessed to hitting Rashidi on the head with a metal object due to personal disputes. He said he then wrapped the body in a carpet and dumped it in Salmi with the help of the Egyptian man. They then burned the tent to destroy any evidence and bloodstains.

The source said investigations went from Kuwait to Egypt with coordination and cooperation with Egyptian authorities to question the Egyptian man who witnessed the crime at the Kabd camp, then helped take the body to the Salmi desert. The source said police arrested the

main suspect one day after Rashidi's disappearance. He denied involvement in the case, but his phone records linked him with the Egyptian, who fled Kuwait after the crime. He said police authorities in Kuwait gave their Egyptian counterparts information about the man, who was arrested within one week by police there.

A police team from Kuwait left for Egypt and questioned the suspect, who confessed and revealed all the details of the gruesome crime. The Egyptian suspect said the main suspect killed the victim with a sharp object at the Kabd camp, then asked him to help in covering the crime, as they burned down the tent, wrapped the body in a carpet, placed it in the suspect's car, took it to the Salmi desert and dumped it in a container, before escaping from the scene. The Egyptian said the main suspect asked him to leave Kuwait, so within 48 hours he left for Egypt. He told Kuwait police about the location of the container, where the decomposed body was found.

Iraq unveils \$17bn project linking...

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"We see this project as a pillar of a sustainable non-oil economy, a link that serves Iraq's neighbors and the region, and a contribution to economic integration efforts," Sudani said.

While further discussions are required, any country that wishes "will be able to carry out part of the project", the Iraqi parliament's transport committee said, adding the project could be completed in "three to five years". "The Route of Development will boost interdependence between the countries of the region," Turkey's ambassador to Baghdad Ali Riza Guney said, without elaborating on what role his country would play in the project.

War-ravaged and beset by rampant corruption, oil-rich Iraq suffers from dilapidated infrastructure. Its

roads, riddled with potholes and poorly maintained, are in terrible condition. Those connecting Baghdad to the north cross areas where sporadic attacks are still carried out by remnants of the Islamic State group. Sudan has prioritized the reconstruction of the country's road network, along with upgrading its failing electricity infrastructure.

Developing the road and rail corridor would allow Iraq to capitalize on its geographical position, with the aim of making the country a transportation hub for goods and people moving between the Gulf, Turkey and Europe. Work has already started to increase capacity at the commercial port of Al-Faw, on the shores of the Gulf, where cargo is to be unloaded before it embarks on the new road and rail links. The project also includes the construction of around 15 train stations along the route, including in the major cities of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, and up to the Turkish border. The Gulf, largely bordered by Iran and Saudi Arabia, is a major shipping zone, especially for the transportation of hydrocarbons extracted by countries of the region. — AFP

Calls for bike lanes after motorist...

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Lumocso was cycling with Bike Group Kuwait, a group of around 60 cyclists who are mostly from the Philippines. Cyclists from India had also joined the group on the day of the accident. Lumocso is an avid biker who practices the hobby on an average of four times a week. The group usually organizes a weekly gathering to practice the sport on Gulf Road every Friday at dawn to avoid traffic.

However, Lumocso said reckless driving is too common for them to feel safe, even cycling in the early hours of the morning. "We want support from the government (to provide) bike lanes," he told Kuwait Times. "There are no bike lanes in Kuwait. There are several multinational bike groups in the country, and all of them are making the same appeal to the