

Analysis

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
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Moscow, Kiev
exchanged

Russia and Ukraine carried out a long-awaited swap of 70 prisoners yesterday. As a result of five years of bitter conflict, dozens of prisoners have been held by the two ex-Soviet countries. Here are the high-profile prisoners involved in the swap.

Ukrainian filmmaker Sentsov

Film director Oleg Sentsov is the most prominent of the Ukrainian prisoners held by Russia. In 2015, he was sentenced to 20 years in a Russian Arctic penal colony on terror charges after a trial that Amnesty International likened to a Stalin-era show trial. During court appearances, he remained unbroken, often smiling, singing the Ukrainian anthem and making defiant comments.

Sentsov, 43, opposed Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, where he lived. He was sent to a strict-regime penal colony on the remote Yamal peninsula where he spent 145 days without solid food last year, demanding the release of all Ukrainian political prisoners. His severe health problems and support from international film stars including Johnny Depp did not cause the Kremlin to budge. Another Ukrainian, Alexander Kolchenko, who was convicted as Sentsov's co-defendant with a lower sentence, was also picked for release.

MH17 witness Tsemakh

Vladimir Tsemakh, an alleged air defense specialist for pro-Russian separatists who Dutch investigators have described as a key witness in the downing of flight MH17, was also part of the exchange. Ahead of the exchange, Dutch investigators questioned Tsemakh in Kiev this week, an informed source told AFP. Investigators consider him a "witness", not a "suspect", the source added.

Journalist Vyshynsky

A journalist for Russia's state-funded RIA Novosti news agency, 52-year-old Kyrylo Vyshynsky was detained last year in Kiev and charged with "high treason" in the interests of Moscow. He has dual Ukrainian and Russian citizenship.

24 Ukrainian sailors

Russian coastguards captured 24 Ukrainian sailors off the coast of Crimea in November last year after seizing their three vessels. The crew includes 22 sailors and two agents of Ukraine's SBU security service. Moscow had wanted to put them on trial for violating Russia's maritime borders.

Ukraine's Klykh and Karpyuk

Stanislav Klykh, 45, is a history professor while Mykola Karpyuk, 55, is a senior member of two Ukrainian nationalist protest groups. They were arrested in Moscow in 2014 and handed lengthy sentences for fighting against Russian armed forces in Chechnya in the 1990s. Both men said they confessed after being tortured.

Ukrainian blogger Gryb

Pavlo Gryb, a 21-year-old blogger, is the youngest Ukrainian prisoner. Kiev said he was kidnapped by Russian special forces in Belarus where he went to visit a friend. Russia sentenced him to six years in prison after finding him guilty of inciting a friend to carry out a bombing.

Ukraine journalist Sushchenko

Roman Sushchenko, 50, was Paris correspondent for Ukraine's Ukrinform national news agency. He was detained while on holiday in Moscow and last year sentenced to 12 years for espionage after he was accused of serving in Ukrainian military intelligence and gathering Russian state secrets. —AFP

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A vendor sells the various daily newspapers on the streets of Harare yesterday, on the first day of a period of national mourning following the death of former Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe, guerrilla hero turned despot who ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years. —AFP

Celebrate or cry? Zimbabweans have mixed feelings about Robert Mugabe

Some call him a 'true African' and a 'revolutionary icon'. For others, the name evokes only 'evil', 'destruction' and 'suffering'. Zimbabweans on Friday woke up to the death of their founding president Robert Mugabe - a hero-turned despot whose increasingly tyrannical rule and economic mismanagement prompted millions to leave the country. "To be honest I thought I would celebrate when he died," said Tatenda Musoni, a 39-year old school teacher in Zimbabwe's capital Harare. "I'm actually sad because he was an embodiment of what a true African should be." Mugabe, 95, died overnight in a hospital in Singapore, where he was receiving medical care. He ruled Zimbabwe for 37 years - making him one of Africa's longest-serving presidents - before being deposed by the military in 2017. "As a leader the only thing he did wrong was to stay in power for a long time," Harare resident Joshua Tsenzete told AFP on the morning of his death.

"He liberated us from the colonialists as well as gave us land," said George Bindu, as the passersby went on with their daily business. Mugabe, a former guerrilla lord

who led Zimbabwe to independence from Britain in 1980, was initially hailed for preaching racial reconciliation and for extending education and health services to the black majority. One Harare resident, Eddington Pangezi, recalled that "speaking proper English" was "courtesy of our former president".

'Manipulated everyone'

Mugabe's rule took a dark turn in the early 1980s with the slaughter of thousands of civilians belonging to the ethnic group of a political rival. He then led a violent campaign against white farmers - many of whom backed the main opposition party - causing the collapse of agricultural production.

"Mugabe was an educated man but he used his education for evil," said Baster Magwizi, a war veteran in the southwestern city of Bulawayo. "He manipulated everyone around him and fooled the world, only Zimbabweans can testify to this as we lived in hell under his leadership." Mugabe responded to the farming crisis and a series of poorly judged economic reforms by pumping cash into the

economy. The resulting hyperinflation rendered the Zimbabwean currency worthless and plunged thousands into poverty.

"I am a qualified mechanic but I never got employed," Bulawayo hawkker Isaac Maenzanise told AFP. "Going around carrying these brooms is not by choice." Nicolas Mapena, head of the Zimbabwean diaspora in South Africa, said many Zimbabweans left the country after "Mugabe collapsed the economy". "President Mandela died in South Africa," he said. "Whereas our political leadership has not been seeking treatment in Zimbabwe. And this is because they collapsed the healthcare sector, the educational system and the economy."

'We used to buy bread'

On the streets of Yeoville, a central Johannesburg neighborhood popular with foreigners, Zimbabweans had mixed feelings about Mugabe's passing. "We are here in South Africa because of what was happening in Zimbabwe. We didn't want to be here, we came here just because of the situation that Mugabe created," said Palmolive Nxumalo, 38, who works as a

waitress. "On my side I am happy that he is dead."

Faraynesu Madzimore, a 47-year old telecom engineer, told AFP he was saddened by the news. "We regard him as a great Zimbabwean citizen and I am sure you know about the education of the people in Zimbabwe." Close to three million Zimbabweans live abroad, according to the International Organization for Migration. They moved to neighboring South Africa and Botswana, and further afield to Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States among others.

"Since 1993 things started to change very dramatically," said Lamek Swanda, a Zimbabwean security guard. "We left our beloved country just because of him." But like many Zimbabweans, Swanda was more concerned with the economic hardship that continues under the current president. "That guy was much better than what we have now," said Harare taxi driver Mandla Latefa. "We used to buy bread for 90 cents and now it's \$9." Zimbabwe's annual inflation rate hit 176 percent in June, the highest in the world after Venezuela. —AFP

What did violence
bring to Hong Kong?By Li Minggang
Ambassador of China

On August 31st, a 13-year-old boy from Hong Kong, misled by violent individuals, was found carrying two petrol bombs and lighters and arrested by Hong Kong police for the vandalizing of a Hong Kong's MTR station. It is truly heartrending to see this boy, who should have returned to school with his classmates, was misguided by ill-intentioned rioters and involved in such violent activities.

Another Hong Kong secondary-school student recently wrote to a newspaper: "In the past two months, Hong Kong has suffered severe damages. Violent black-clad mobs have repeatedly recklessly crossed the police line and mercilessly attacked innocent residents; they defaced the Chinese national emblem with ink, and even unscrupulously desecrated the Chinese national flag and threw it into the sea. It is really heartbreaking to see all of this."

This letter truly reflects the sincere aspirations of most Hong Kong teenagers to fight violence and restore peace. Not long ago, I contributed an article to the newspapers to introduce the situation in Hong Kong. However, Hong Kong has not restored calm since August, as some opposition parties and radical elements further escalated violence and riots under the pretext of peaceful protests.

They used guerrilla tactics to vandalize and damage various places, deliberately paralyzed the traffic, besieged the MTR stations to obstruct people from working and traveling, and even showed no mercy towards a pregnant woman and prevented her from going to a hospital. Hong Kong police have exercised strong restraint, but the violent criminals intensified their actions by storming police stations, assaulting police officers with poisonous and hazardous liquid and powders, iron bars, arrows and petrol bombs, damaging police officers' eyes with laser pointers, harassing and threatening police families, and beating innocent residents and reporters.

So far, more than 500 people have been injured in violent conflicts, including 177 police personnel. On August 31st alone, violent radicals destroyed 32 MTR stations, which accounts for one-third of the total. These violence and extremist acts have breached the bottom lines of law, moral ethics and humanity, greatly disturbed the living and working conditions of Hong Kong residents, and caused serious harm to Hong Kong. Such behaviors should not be tolerated by any civilized society governed by the rule of law.

Up till now, in addition to committing violent crimes, the radical protesters have even publicly supported and promoted the agenda of "Hong Kong independence". Other than those who turned blind eyes, any country or person with a sense of justice will not regard the current chaos in Hong Kong as "an expression of democracy and freedom", and will instead recognize that the opposition forces and extremist demonstrators have exploited gullible people who were unaware of the truth, and attempted to destabilize the legitimate government of HKSAR, challenge the authority of the Chinese central government, and shaken the constitutional basis of "One Country, Two Systems" principle in Hong Kong through illegal and violent means, which bears the features of a "colored revolution".

Many facts demonstrate that the external forces have inflamed the recent situation in Hong Kong. When recalling the "colored revolutions" in some Arab states like Iraq, Syria, Libya and Yemen, it

could be found that all those revolutions began from peaceful petitions and protests, then evolved to social chaos, followed by labor and student strikes and paralysis in traffic, and finally escalated to terrorist acts, aiming to force the government to surrender.

These tragic events eventually resulted in nearly one million deaths and economic losses amounting to almost one trillion dollars in the Arab world. Eight years have passed, however these countries still suffer from economic hardship, social unrest and prevalence of terrorism. Now the external forces are employing the same steps and tactics in Hong Kong.

A substantial number of videos and photos have indicated that violent acts in Hong Kong are organized: Although the rioters have a lower standard of education, they use special and professional hand signals, have developed methods to deal with tear gas, and use extremely dangerous laser pointers to avoid penalties. It is clear to see that they have received special training. Seeing those well-organized and well-equipped rioters, we feel compelled to ask: Who have been providing financial and material support to the rioters, and who have been delivering and distributing the equipment? Since what happened in Hong Kong, the Western media, instead of reporting the situation in a just and unbiased manner, have failed to play a credible role by misleading the public. There has been massive coverage on so-called "right to peaceful protest", whitewashing and glorifying the violent offences by the extreme radicals, while discrediting and smearing the legitimate acts of the Hong Kong police to punish perpetrators of violence and uphold law and order.

Some social media even deleted comments in favor of the HKSAR government and the police, and banned voices of justice for supporting the HKSAR government and upholding Hong Kong's law and order. Recently, CNN has made clarifications and apologized to Hong Kong Police Force after it was found that CNN maliciously deleted and altered some video contents during its coverage of the situation in Hong Kong. Such selective reporting and distortion have resulted in the prevalence of misinformation and have misled the public who are unaware of the truth. It is fair to say that Western media have inescapable responsibility for the current situation in Hong Kong. The most pressing priority of Hong Kong now is to end violence and restore order. The Chinese central government firmly supports the HKSAR Government and Chief Executive Carrie Lam in governing Hong Kong in accordance with law, supports the Hong Kong police and judiciary bodies in strict, rigorous and decisive enforcement, and supports the acts of justice by the majority of Hong Kong residents who oppose violence, uphold the rule of law and support the police. Any violent act that tramples upon the rule of law in Hong Kong, undermines Hong Kong's prosperity and stability, and challenges the "One Country, Two Systems" principle must be brought to justice. Any foreign country, organization or individual attempting to interfere in Hong Kong affairs will be resolutely countered by the entire Chinese people, including Hong Kong residents.

Any attempt to incite a "colored revolution" in Hong Kong will end in vain. Peace, like air and sunshine, is hardly noticed when people are benefiting from it, but none of us can live without it. Those countries that suffered greatly from street politics and have not yet been spared from the chaos and disorder caused by the "Arab Spring" would have deeper feelings.

I believe that all Kuwaiti and Arab friends, who have a sense of justice and care about Hong Kong, will support Hong Kong in restoring social order at an early date, achieving sustained peace and stability, and maintaining prosperity and development. We are

confident that Hong Kong will overcome the current difficulties, emerge from the shadow of recent chaos, and the 'Pearl of the Orient' will shine again brightly.

Message from
Embassy of Pakistan
in Kuwait

Dear Editor-in-Chief,

This rejoinder is with regard to a news item captioned "Teen dies by stone-pelting in Kashmir" published on 5th September, 2019 on Page Number (8) of your newspaper. It is requested that the following may be published in your newspaper for the sake of fair and impartial reporting.

The Embassy of Pakistan, Kuwait completely rejects the assertion in the above news item that these deaths have happened because of terrorists, stone pelters and puppets of Pakistan. There is no proof provided in the story that Pakistan is responsible for it.

The fact is that the whole population of Indian Occupied Kashmir is protesting against Indian government for denying them their inalienable right of self-determination given by international law and relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions. The Indian government is committing gross human rights violations in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, which has been clearly documented by United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its two successive reports in June 2018 and July 2019.

UN Secretary General in his statement of 8 August, 2019, had clearly stated that the UN's position on this region (Jammu & Kashmir) was governed by the UN Charter and the relevant UNSC resolutions. Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in its recent press release issued on 31st August, 2019, has also reaffirmed the UNSC Resolutions on status of Jammu and Kashmir dispute and its final disposition through a UN supervised plebiscite.

In order to help alleviate suffering of the Kashmiri People on an urgent basis, the intervention of international community and human rights organizations is essential at this point. Indian government should be urged to revoke its illegal actions taken on 5th August, 2019 with regard to the status of Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir and immediately stop all human rights violations being carried out by its security forces in the valley.

Best Regards
Ashar Shahzad
Charged Affairs
Embassy of Pakistan, Kuwait