



RIGHTS ROLLBACK. The secretary-general of Amnesty International, Salil Shetty, shows the 408-page Amnesty International report during a press conference in Paris. Amnesty named Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, and U.S. President Donald Trump among leaders it said are “wielding a toxic agenda that hounds, scapegoats, and dehumanizes entire groups of people.” (AP Photo/Thibault Camus)

Amnesty blames Trump, others in global rollback of rights

By John Leicester
The Associated Press

PARIS — Amnesty International says “toxic” fear-mongering by anti-establishment politicians, among them U.S. President Donald Trump and the leaders of Turkey, Hungary, and the Philippines, are contributing to a global pushback against human rights.

Releasing its 408-page annual report on rights abuses around the world, the watchdog group described 2016 as “the year when the cynical use of ‘us vs. them’ narratives of blame, hate, and fear took on a global prominence to a level not seen since the 1930s,” when Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany.

Amnesty named Trump, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte among leaders it said are “wielding a toxic agenda that hounds, scapegoats, and dehumanizes entire groups of people.”

“Poisonous” rhetoric employed by Trump in his election campaign exemplified “the global trend of angrier and more divisive politics,” Amnesty said.

“The limits of what is acceptable have shifted. Politicians are shamelessly and actively legitimizing all sorts of hateful rhetoric and policies based on people’s identity: misogyny, racism, and homophobia. The first target has been refugees and, if this continues in 2017, others will be in the crosshairs.”

The group’s annual report, “The State of the World’s Human Rights,” documented what it called “grave violations of human rights” in 159 countries in 2016.

Amnesty said governments “turned a blind eye to war crimes, pushed through deals that undermine the right to claim asylum, passed laws that violate free expression, incited the murder of people simply because they are accused of using drugs, justified torture and mass surveillance, and extended draconian police powers.”

It added that “the big question in 2017 will be how far the world lets atrocities go before doing something about them.”

Exceptionally, London-based Amnesty chose to launch its report in Paris.

Salil Shetty, the group’s secretary-general, said France has used emergency powers introduced in 2015 in the wake of terror attacks in an abusive and “deeply discriminatory” manner, confining more than 600 people, mostly Muslims, under house arrest and banning more than 140 protests.

“Even states that once claimed to champion rights abroad are now too busy rolling back human rights at home to hold others to account,” Amnesty said. “The more countries backtrack on fundamental human-rights commitments, the more we risk a domino effect of leaders emboldened to knock back established human-rights protections.”

France’s government has repeatedly defended the emergency powers as a necessary safeguard against the severe terror threat it says is facing the country, and parliament has repeatedly voted to extend those powers.

Prefecture in China’s Xinjiang to track cars by satellite

By Gerry Shih
The Associated Press

BEIJING — A prefecture in China’s far western Xinjiang region is requiring all vehicles to install satellite tracking systems as part of stepped-up measures against violent attacks.

Traffic police in Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture announced the regulation shortly after thousands of heavily armed police paraded in the Xinjiang capital and ruling Communist Party officials vowed to ramp up their campaign against separatists and Islamic militants.

The vehicle-tracking program in Bayingolin will utilize China’s homegrown Beidou satellite system, launched in recent years to reduce China’s reliance on U.S.-based GPS providers for sensitive applications. Authorities said they will also track cars using RFID technology embedded in license plates.

“In recent years, the terrorist situation around the world has become severe, and cars are the main means of transport for terrorists,” said prefectural authorities in an online statement. Authorities aimed to register and track up to 20,000 vehicles, the statement said.

Gas stations will only serve cars equipped with the tracking system, according to a separate local news report. Police officials in the prefecture confirmed the tracking program to The AP but declined to answer questions.

Xinjiang officials have sharply increased surveillance, street searches, and police patrols in recent years amid bombings,



SAFETY VS. PRIVACY. Vehicles are seen driving on snow-covered roads in Urumqi, the capital of north-west China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. A prefecture in China’s Xinjiang region is requiring all vehicles to install satellite tracking systems as part of stepped-up measures against violent attacks. Traffic police in Bayingolin Mongol Autonomous Prefecture announced the regulation shortly after thousands of heavily armed police paraded in Urumqi and Communist Party officials vowed to ramp up a campaign against separatists and Islamic militants. (Wang Fei/Xinhua via AP)

vehicle and knife attacks blamed on separatist militants from the native ethnic Uighur minority. Uighur activists say economic marginalization and a repressive government presence — including restrictions on Muslim religious and cultural practices — have fuelled resentment and feed a vicious cycle of radicalization and violence.

Xinjiang shares a border with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and several unstable

Central Asian states. The Chinese government denies religious discrimination and says its policies are needed to maintain stability in a region targeted by militant Islamic radicals.

Despite the constant state of police lockdown, three knife-wielding attackers killed five and injured five others in Xinjiang’s far western Pishan county last month, while several clashes between police forces and

militants have been reported in recent months in the region’s southern towns.

At a rally in the regional capital of Urumqi, Xinjiang party official Zhu Hailun exhorted rows of rifle-toting soldiers and police in tactical anti-riot uniforms to use their “hot blood and loyalty” to defend the people and deal a “crushing, obliterating blow” against separatist and radical Islamic forces from Central Asia.

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