

International

Germany Votes; Interview with Haitian Foreign Minister Claude Joseph on U.S. Deporting Thousands Back to Haiti; Taliban Display Bodies of Alleged Kidnappers; Afghan Refugees Hope to Start New Lives in Britain; Canary Islands Volcano in New Explosive Stage. Aired 12- 12:30a ET

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MICHAEL HOLMES, CNN ANCHOR AND CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Hello and welcome to CNN NEWSROOM, everyone, I am Michael Holmes, appreciate your company.

Coming up here on CNN NEWSROOM, who will replace Angela Merkel?

Well, T minus 2 hours until polls open in Germany in one of the most unpredictable elections in years.

Haiti's foreign minister will join me on the program, his reaction to the U.S. treatment of migrants at the border.

Plus, new warnings that dangerous explosions could be imminent from this erupting volcano in the Canary Islands.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

HOLMES: But first, a political watershed moment in Germany. Voters will, in two hours from, now head to the polls in an election who will determine who succeeds Angela Merkel as chancellor after nearly 16 years in the job.

Ms. Merkel has been a symbol of political stability in Europe since taking on the role in November 2005. This election has major implications not just for the future of Germany but for Europe, more broadly. The chancellor's Christian Democratic Union is hoping to stay in power but polling shows the race is wide open.

On Saturday, she made her final pitch to rally voters behind the conservatives.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) ANGELA MERKEL, CHANCELLOR OF GERMANY (through translator): And this future government, I think we all agree, should ensure prosperity, security, peace and that is what we are standing here for because we, from the Christian Democratic Union, are making an offer for this.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HOLMES: And for more, CNN European affairs commentator Dominic Thomas joins me now live, from Berlin.

Good to see you, Dominic.

As voting gets underway, what is your read of the landscape?

DOMINIC THOMAS, CNN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMENTATOR: Seismic change is upon us. What is fascinating is the German electorate has had, of course, four years to prepare for this.

And yet by the end of the, day we will know how the different parties scored. But we won't actually have any idea as to who is going to be the chancellor. They don't elect a president; they don't elect a prime minister.

We are going to be looking at possibly months of complex coalition talks, in a system, in which no one political party has any opportunity of scoring a majority.

And perhaps in a historical situation, it may even be that two political parties together are unlikely to get a majority. So it will be interesting to see how the numbers play out and what the potential scenarios could be moving forward over the next few days, weeks and months.

HOLMES: It really just is the beginning of the coalition horse trading, isn't it?

Let's talk about Angela Merkel. Nearly 16 years in power; clearly, as we have been saying, the end of an era. But not just for Germany, for Europe, given her role as staunch defender of the European experiment.

In many ways she has been the glue.

How might her departure impact of the E.U.?

THOMAS: It has certainly had a tough time in just a few years, of, course with Brexit being the number one story there. And in so many ways, the presence of Angela Merkel over this 16 year period has not just been the story of the European Union but you can argue the story of a global politics as well.

I think it's not just her -- her presence and unyielding commitment, it's specific actions she has taken. I think, most notably, of the 2014--2015, so-called migrant crisis and the subsequent oxygen that that gave the far right political groups in Europe.

And the way she stood up to them, not just in Germany but in the European Union, so many of these groups have been detractors. But she has also been an incredible mediator in the sense that she doesn't just have a strong relationship with the Atlantic and with other European nations as such, she's also been an incredible mediator with that other part of the world, most notably the Russian Federation.

Her ability to speak to Vladimir Putin and so. On it introduces, I, think further uncertainty. Having said, that what is interesting about the political discussion in Germany today, is that the leading candidates are not anti E.U. candidates.

They might have different views in terms of fiscal policy, levels of integration moving forward. But they all remain steadfast defenders of the European Union concept itself. And to that extent, there will be continuity and civility (ph).

HOLMES: I want to ask you this, a Pew poll showed that Merkel to be the world's most trusted leader.

[00:05:00]

HOLMES: And "Forbes" magazine ranked her the world's most powerful woman.

Apart from keeping the E.U. together, what else will form her legacy?

THOMAS: I think there's so much that we could talk about. As I just mentioned, she has been a part of that 21st century story. It's staggering to think that, when she came to power in 2005, George W. Bush was the President of the United States. Tony Blair was the prime minister in the U.K.

She has worked with no less than nine presidents and prime ministers, just from those two countries. So she has been there for the global financial crisis, the migrants crisis, the question of the European Union, the mediation with other parts of the world.

So there have been ups and downs. But she nevertheless has provided the kind of level of security and stability, which is going to go away at the moment when she leaves. It's a new Germany that we are looking at coming forward now.

And it is being expressed in all these different political parties and in what is a somewhat divided political landscape moving forward.

HOLMES: She was certainly the master centrist. We will let continue on in her absence. Dominic Thomas, thank you so, much in Berlin, we really appreciate it.

THOMAS: Thank. You

HOLMES: And do tune in for CNN special live coverage of the German federal elections, join Hala Gorani, Fred Pleitgen and Salma Abdelaziz as they will break it down for us, later today, beginning at 11:55 am, if you are in New York, 5:55 in the afternoon in Berlin. You will see it right here on CNN.

As his country reels from the assassination of his president and the deadly earthquake, Haiti's president says migration will not stop until inequality. Does.

Ariel Henry spoke on a video at the U.N. on Saturday after thousands of migrants, most of them from Haiti, were cleared out from a camp at the U.S.-Mexico border. Images of border guards on horses confronting the migrants have been slammed in the U.S. and around the world.

Mr. Henry said the countries have the right to control their borders but he's also calling for cooperation to make sure the rights of refugees are respected.

CNN's Melissa Bell joins me now from Haiti.

Thanks for doing so, Melissa.

A country in upheaval after a massive earthquake, the assassination of a president, what are Haitians telling you about their experience and the likely future?

MELISSA BELL, CNN CORRESPONDENT: Well, they -- we've heard a lot of similar stories. People who have spent many years, they left many years ago, seeking asylum in countries like Brazil and Chile and then finding that, as work dried up into the pandemic, they wanted to head north. And then they found the worse treatment of all, after many months of crossing huge parts of Latin America, at the American border itself.

Since the ones that have ended up, here are essentially those who have not been able to claim asylum in the United States. Many people were being put back on planes without knowing where there were headed.

What we are hearing is that they plan to leave again as soon as they. Can they have no intention of staying in a country that essentially they find in a worse state than when they left it several years ago.

As you mentioned, it's the violence that has worsened, the poverty has increased, the political instability that has grown since the assassination of the president. And this recent spate of kidnappings increases the sense of security already in the streets of Port-au-Prince. It's actually gotten worse.

Many of them are saying that they are cross, they are angry that they have been sent back here without the due process that they were hoping to have, without being heard by the United States in terms of their cases and in terms of treatment that they got here.

Many people spoke of being chained and put on planes without being told where they were. Going so there's anger also from the broader Haitian population at what they see as unfair treatment.

There is anger that the United States has carried out these deportations, anger also at the Haitian government. On the streets of Port-au-Prince, a man chased us back into the car, shouting at us, you don't want us in the United States, we don't want you here.

HOLMES: Thank you Melissa Bell, we appreciate your reporting from. There (BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

HOLMES: Claude Joseph is the foreign minister of Haiti, he joins me, now.

Thank you for joining me here, sir.

What is the situation for the migrants being returned from the United States?

What is being done to settle them back in?

CLAUDE JOSEPH, HAITIAN PRIME MINISTER: We are trying to actually support them. That is what we can and should do because, if they have to come back, as government, we have to receive them.

[00:10:00]

JOSEPH: So the situation, we know it will not be easy for them, given the fact that some of them have been living in Chile or Brazil for years. So they actually have to reintegrate into society and we are doing our utmost to support the migrants.

HOLMES: The prime minister said that he was shocked at what happened at the U.S. border.

How do you believe the U.S. handled and is handling the situation, when it comes to Haitian migrants?

JOSEPH: We were really shocked and, as many Americans, as many voices, they have spoken out about the shocking images of horse mounted officials, whipping those migrants. Those are disturbing images.

We only ask that the Haitians are treated humanly. We are very -- it's unfortunate that this is exactly how -- what happened.

HOLMES: Speaking of the prime minister, he told the UNGA that he was committed to finding out what was behind the assassination of Jovenel Moise as he is being investigated, too.

What is the status of the investigation and can Haitians have faith that the truth will actually come out?

JOSEPH: We actually asked the U.N. to assist the Haitian justice system because we acknowledge that our system has its weakness, its weaknesses and its strengths also. But we definitely need support.

That is why the government asks support from the U.N. so we can actually know what really happened because this is a nightmarish situation, that our president has been killed in his own compound. This is a tragic death.

And the nation has to find justice. Also, the president's family, his wife, his kids, they have to know what really happened.

HOLMES: Hopefully, you will get that assistance because not much is coming out at the moment.

I want to go back to the migrant situation quickly.

What does Haiti need to do, the government, your government, to stop people wanting or needing to leave in the first place?

JOSEPH: We believe that this is a situation where we need solidarity. And I'm talking about hemispheric solidarity. I was recently in Mexico. I spoke with the minister of foreign affairs over their immigration people.

We are setting a table where we will have different stakeholders from Chile, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Panama, Haiti, Mexico. We believe we need to work together. Because what the situation in Del Rio shows is that the problem of one country, in our region, is a problem of all.

So we need to work together. We need to adjust this situation structurally.

HOLMES: Haiti needs much help, I hope you get it. Claude Joseph, foreign minister of Haiti, thank you so much for your time.

JOSEPH: Thank you so much.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HOLMES: Coming up next on the program, we go to Afghanistan, where the Taliban have put bodies of alleged kidnappers on display as a warning to others.

Also, thousands of Afghan asylum seekers are stuck in limbo, despite the U.K.'s resettlement plan for evacuated refugees.

Also, after the break, two Canadians return home after three years in Chinese prisons. Suddenly set free after the U.S. suspends its fraud case against an executive of Huawei.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

[00:15:00]

(MUSIC PLAYING)

HOLMES: Welcome back.

Shocking images are coming out of Afghanistan, showing the disturbing lengths the Taliban seem willing to go to deter crime. We must warn you, the video you're about to see is graphic and difficult to watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HOLMES (voice-over): Crowds gathered in Herat after the Taliban killed four alleged kidnappers and then hung their bodies in on display in different locations around the city.

A journalist telling CNN the men were accused of kidnapping a merchant and his son who were later freed by the Taliban. Earlier this week a Taliban member told the Associated Press that the groups would restore severe punishments like executions and amputations as a warning to others.

The U.S. condemned these actions, calling them a grotesque abuse of human rights.

Thousands of Afghans who have managed to flee the Taliban are hoping to start new lives in Britain, many of them arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs. But as they start to build their future, they see uncertainty and a helping hand from perfect strangers. Nada Bashir reports.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

NADA BASHIR, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): At this Central London hotel, hosting Afghan refugees, donations have been piling in.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We have had products like shampoo, baby food.

BASHIR (voice-over): Volunteers here are working daily to support refugees, evacuated by the British government.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: A lot of them have come with just a backpack. Even at that, some of that no shoes on their feet.

BASHIR (voice-over): Aziza and her 2 children were among the thousands airlifted from Kabul, she said fleeing the Taliban was a traumatic experience but the support and kindness of these volunteers has given her hope for a better life in the U.K.

AZIZA, AFGHAN REFUGEE (through translator): I hope to live without fear, to live in peace and security with my children and family. I don't want to hear any more gunshots or explosions.

BASHIR: Why was it so important for you and your family to leave Afghanistan?

AZIZA (through translator): After the Taliban entered, everyone was scared, everyone was very horrified and afraid. Kabul was in a very bad situation. People were in a state of horror, people were afraid to leave their homes.

BASHIR (voice-over): The government plans to resettle some 20,000 Afghan refugees, including 5,000 over the next year. Dubbed Operation Warm Welcome, the resettlement scheme will prioritize those who assisted U.K. efforts in Afghanistan, allowing refugees to come into the country through official routes to receive permanent residency.

But for the more than 3,000 Afghan nationals already in the asylum system, the reception has been far from warm.

BASHIR: Under current government policy, Afghan refugees who arrived in the U.K. prior to the fall of Kabul will not be eligible for immediate resettlement. Instead, they face the agonizing wait to find out whether or not they will be turned away.

BASHIR (voice-over): In Oxford, Allison and the team at Century Hosting are working around the clock to connect Afghan asylum seekers with temporary host families.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It is cruel to leave people in limbo. The government says it's not safe to send them back now.

[00:20:00]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Do they really believe it's going to be safe to send them back in the next five to 10 years?

But they've been bombarded with emails by people from all over the country, saying what can we do to help, what can we do to help?

And many of them are suggesting that, yes, of course, they have a spare bed, a spare room that they can make available to a refugee.

BASHIR (voice-over): These two families are among the dozens of families across the U.K. preparing to host Afghan asylum seekers. They believe the country has a duty to support the people of Afghanistan.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: The fact that we are partly responsible for the situation they find themselves in, we feel it's only right to do something about this.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We're very lucky. We have a lovely home, we've got some jobs, we have got our family, they have got nothing.

So why not share some of that with somebody else, somebody who needs it really more than us?

BASHIR (voice-over): For now, the government says it has paused all enforced returns for Afghan nationals denied asylum. With those at risk of persecution assured they will not be expected to return to Afghanistan.

But until a decision is made, the future for thousands of vulnerable Afghans here in the U.K. remains uncertain at best -- Nada Bashir, CNN, London.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HOLMES: Two Canadians held for nearly three years in China are back home and they are reuniting with their very happy and relieved families. Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor first arrived in Calgary early on Saturday.

Kovrig then flew on to Toronto. Out about the same time, senior Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was touching down in Xinjiang in China, where she received a red carpet reception.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP) MENG WANZHOU, CFO, HUAWEI (through translator): As an ordinary Chinese citizen who had suffered the plight of being stranded overseas for nearly three years, there was never a moment when I did not feel the clear and warmth of the party, the motherland and the people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HOLMES: Now the homecomings marked the end of a 3-year standoff between Washington and Beijing with Ottawa in the middle. Meng had been in house arrest in Vancouver since late 2018, charged by the U.S. with fraud.

But on Friday the U.S. said it was suspending the case as part of an agreement and she could leave. Soon afterwards, the two Canadian men were taken from their Chinese prison cells and put back on a plane to Canada.

Coming up here on CNN NEWSROOM, a new warning for an erupting volcano in the Canary Islands. Why officials fear more dangerous explosions could be imminent. We'll be right back.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(MUSIC PLAYING)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HOLMES (voice-over): The roar there of a Royal Australian Air Force C-17, flying right over the city of Brisbane. The low altitude flypast part of the city's annual Sun Super River Fire Festival, billed as Australia's longest and most spectacular fireworks.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HOLMES: Now officials in the Canary Islands are warning that the volcano in La Palma is getting even more dangerous. You're looking there at live pictures, spectacular but terrifying at the same time.

This volcano has been erupting for a week now, destroying hundreds of homes. Thousands of people forced to evacuate as the lava you see on your screen as well as ash engulf the area.

[00:25:00]

HOLMES: And those who remain are wondering if their livelihood will be lost.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

HOLMES (voice-over): Red hot lava sears through the darkness over Spain's La Palma Island, a shocking display from afar and chaos for anyone living near the volcano.

Daylight in La Palma is time for cleaning up. Shopowners sweep away the ashes that have accumulated overnight. The volcano has spewed out thousands of tons of lava since it began erupting a week ago.

But experts say it is now in a dangerous explosive stage and a new emission vent has opened. Firefighters are evacuating more towns because of the volatility. So far about 6,000 people have been forced to leave their homes.

Spain's airport operator announced the island's airport was inoperable Sunday; too many clouds of ash and volcanic debris on the runways. Several flights were canceled, leaving some tourists stranded. Others joined the long lines at the ferry to try to leave town.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): I feel sad for the people who are having such a bad time. We feel very bad about what is happening.

HOLMES (voice-over): But leaving is not an easy option for some. Besides tourism, La Palma depends on banana crops to support its economy.

This farmer says his house was spared but his harvest is lost. The fruit that wasn't blackened by the heat is contaminated by volcanic dust.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE (through translator): This is all burned. This has been completely burned by the heat and the wind. And the same goes for that over there. The bananas are completely burned.

HOLMES (voice-over): This family, living in the shadow of the volcano, all too familiar with its rumblings and the warnings that come with it. Their bags are packed and ready to go when authorities tell them to evacuate.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE (through translator): I cannot sleep. It's constantly there. Yesterday, shock waves were reaching us and the house was shaking.

HOLMES (voice-over): Hoping against hope that their home will be safe, like this one, left untouched by a previous lava flow, when everything else around it was lost.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

HOLMES: Incredible.

Thanks for spending part of your day with me. I'm Michael Holmes, you can follow me on Twitter and Instagram @HolmesCNN. "INSIDE AFRICA" is up after this short break. I'll see you a little later.

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