VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Jonathan Jones reporting.

Hundreds of people took to the streets of Tunisia's capital for a new demonstration Sunday after a week of protests in Tunis and across the North African country. They were fueled by rising frustrations with the country's social and economic issues.

Anger has been growing since price hikes were introduced by the government earlier this month.

Sunday also marked the seventh year since Tunisia's Arab Spring uprising that toppled President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali after 23 years in power.

Fatima Ben Hassine said the revolution brought nothing concrete to our daily lives which only get worse and worse. The politicians whose only concern is their comfort leave us in despair.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said he is not interested in extending his six-year term or canceling elections next year.

He made the statement in an interview with news website MindaNews. He said "there will be no suspension of elections and there will be no term extension, especially for me." Duterte's term ends in 2022.

One change he would like to see is the transformation of the Senate and the House of Representatives into one chamber with just 50 lawmakers who can quickly enact laws.

The Iranian government acknowledged Sunday that 25 people had been killed during recent anti-government protests in cities throughout the country.

A spokesman said that none of dead were killed by security forces because the officers were ordered not to use their weapons. A number of security officers were also reported to be among the dead.

This is VOA news.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson joins foreign ministers in Vancouver, Canada, this week to assess further diplomatic options to counter North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile test.

VOA correspondent Nikki Ching reports.

The latest diplomatic push comes after South and North Korea agreed in recent days to resolve problems through dialogue following escalated tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear proliferation. Only agenda in Vancouver: assessing further options for the international pressure campaign on North Korea.

The United States said North Korea has suffered under global sanctions.

Officials say Washington is not advocating for regime change in North Korea, but the U.S. is talking to China about the safe disposition of the country's nuclear weapons to prepare for any scenario.

While China and Russia were not invited to the Vancouver meeting, U.S. officials say they will receive the details of two state talks.

Nikki Ching, VOA news.

The U.N. refugee agency is calling for more resettlement places and other legal pathways to stop the alarmingly high number of deaths of refugees and migrants along the perilous Central Mediterranean Sea route from Libya to Italy.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from UNHCR headquarters in Geneva.

This has been a particularly deadly beginning to the New Year. The International Organization for Migration reports 176 refugees and migrants have died while making the Mediterranean crossing from Libya to Italy in the first 10 days of this month. It notes only seven people died on this route during the same period last year.

IOM says the majority of survivors come from African countries, including the Gambia, Senegal, Sudan, Mali and Nigeria. Other survivors are from Bangladesh and Pakistan.

U.N. refugee spokesman William Spindler says the alarmingly high death toll is intolerable and legal pathways for refugees to find safety must be found to end the ongoing spiral of tragedies. He says people take these long, dangerous journeys because they have no other option or alternative.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein.

Afghanistan government negotiators and Taliban officials have reportedly opened "unofficial" talks in Turkey to discuss "mechanisms" that could pave the ground for initiating a formal peace dialogue.

You can find more on these and other late breaking and developing stories, from around the world, around the clock, at voanews.com and on the VOA news mobile app. I'm Jonathan Jones reporting from the world headquarters of the Voice of America in Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.