

INTERNATIONAL

Military police enforce driving ban in snow-stricken Buffalo

Associated Press

Buffalo, December 28

State and military police were sent yesterday to keep people off Buffalo's snow-choked roads, and officials kept counting fatalities three days after western New York's deadliest storm in at least two generations.

Even as suburban roads and most major highways in the area reopened, Erie County Executive Mark Polonczak warned that police would be stationed at entrances to Buffalo and at major intersections because some drivers were flouting a ban on driving within New York's second-most populous city.

More than 30 people are reported to have died in the region, officials said, including seven storm-related deaths announced yesterday by Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown's office. The toll surpasses that of the historic blizzard of 1977, blamed for killing as many as 29 people in an area known for harsh winter weather.

Greg Monett turned to social media to beg for help shovelling a 6-foot (1.8-metre) pile of snow from the end of his Buffalo driveway so he could get dialysis treatment yesterday.

"This has been a nightmare," he said in an interview Monday.

Power had been out for a time at his family's home, he said, so relatives ran a gas stove to keep warm, a practice he acknowledged was dangerous.

"We had to do what we had to do," said Monett, 43. "We would have frozen to death in here."

His loved ones called 911 when his blood sugar dipped dangerously low and he nearly passed out Sunday night, but they were told it would take hours to get to the home, Monett said. He eventually recovered on his own.

Officials have said at news briefings that it was impossible to respond to emergency calls at the time.

Monett ultimately made it to dialysis after climbing through the snow and having neighbours help dig out his buried vehicle, sister Maria Monett said.

A Facebook group originally created in 2014, when Buffalo was buried under deep snow, has become a lifeline, seeking to help thousands seeking food, medicine, shelter and rescue in the latest storm. Currently managed by five women, the group swelled to at least 68,000 people as of yesterday.

"We are seeing a lot of desperation," said Erin Aquilina, founder of the original group, in an online interview.

The National Weather Service predicted that as much as 2 inches (2.5 to 5 centimetres) more snow could fall Tuesday in Erie County, which includes Buffalo and its 275,000 residents.

County Emergency Services Commissioner Dan Neaverth Jr. said officials also were somewhat concerned about possible flooding later in the week when milder weather begins melting the snow.

The rest of the United States also was reeling with at least an additional two dozen storm deaths reported elsewhere around the country, and power outages in communities from Maine to Washington state.

On the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's reservation in South Dakota, snowmobiles were dispatched yesterday to reach residents after food boxes were delivered by helicopter and trucks over the weekend, the tribe said. Ohio officials assessed water damage in the Statehouse after a pipe burst amid the freezing weather.

Even in central Florida, temperatures plunged as low as 27 degrees (minus 2.7 Celsius) over the weekend. Growers' groups were relieved yesterday not to find widespread damage to the fruit and vegetable crops that supply much of the US with fresh winter produce.



An aerial view of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition neighbourhood after a blizzard in Buffalo, on Tuesday.



Pope Francis leaving at the end of his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican, on Wednesday.

Heavy rain, flood leave 29 dead in Philippines

Associated Press

Manila, December 28

Heavy rains and floods that devastated parts of the Philippines over the Christmas weekend have left at least 29 dead and 25 missing, the national disaster response agency said today.

More than 86,000 people were still in emergency shelters after bad weather disrupted Christmas celebrations in the eastern, central and southern Philippines.

Images from the southern province of Misamis Occidental showed rescuers carrying an elderly woman on a plastic chair as they waded through a flooded street. Some residents in the province were seen hanging on to floaters as coast guard rescuers pulled them across chest-deep floods using a rope.

Eighteen of the 29 deaths

were reported in the Northern Mindanao region, while 12 of the 25 missing were from Eastern Visayas in the central Philippines, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council said.

Most of the deaths were from drowning while among the missing were fishermen whose boats capsized, the agency said.

Over 3,200 houses were damaged by the floods along with roads and bridges, and some areas were without power or water, the agency reported.

A shear line — the point where warm and cold air meet — triggered rains in parts of the country, the state weather bureau said. A new low pressure area may bring moderate to heavy rains within the next 24 hours to the same areas affected by the floods, it said.

UN calls on Taliban to drop restraints on women

Associated Press

Berlin, December 28

The UN Security Council yesterday decreed increasing restrictions on women's rights in Afghanistan, urging the country's Taliban rulers to reverse them immediately.

The Security Council reiterated its deep concern of the suspension of schools beyond the sixth grade, and its call for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in Afghanistan," it said in a press statement.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk told the council that "terrible consequences" of a decision to bar women from working far from governmental organisations.

Last week, Taliban authorities stopped university education for women, sparking international outrage and demonstrations in Afghan cities.

On Saturday, they announced the exclusion of women from NGO work, a move that already has prompted four major international aid agencies to suspend operations in Afghanistan.

"No country can develop — indeed survive — socially and economically with half its population excluded," Türk said in a statement issued in Geneva.

"These unfathomable restrictions placed on women and girls will not only increase the suffering of all

Afghans but, I fear, pose a risk beyond Afghanistan's borders."

"This latest decree by the de facto authorities will have terrible consequences for women and for all Afghan people," Türk said, adding that banning women from working for NGOs will deprive them and their families of incomes and of the right to "contribute positively" to the country's development.

"The ban will significantly impair, if not destroy, the capacity of these NGOs to deliver the essential services on which so many vulnerable Afghans depend," he said.

Despite initially promising a more moderate rule respecting rights for women and minorities when they took power last year, the Taliban have widely implemented their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or Sharia.

"They have banned girls from middle school and high school, restricted women from most employment and ordered them to wear head-to-toe clothing in public. Women are also banned from parks and gyms."

"Women and girls cannot be denied their inherent rights," Türk said. "Attempts by the de facto authorities to relegate them to silence and invisibility will not succeed — it will merely harm all Afghans, compound their suffering, and impede the country's development."

Vatican says health of retired pope Benedict XVI 'worsening'

Associated Press

Vatican City, December 28

The health of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has worsened due to his age, and doctors are constantly monitoring the frail 95-year-old's condition, the Vatican said today.

Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said Pope Francis, who asked the frail 95-year-old's condition, the Vatican said today. Bruni said Pope Francis, who asked the frail 95-year-old's condition, the Vatican said today.

"Regarding the health condition of the emeritus pope, for whom Pope Fran-

cis asked for prayers at the end of his general audience this morning, I can confirm that in the last hours, a worsening due to advanced age has happened," Bruni said in a written statement.

"The situation at the moment remains under control, constantly monitored by doctors," according to the statement. At the end of his customary Wednesday audience with the public in a Vatican auditorium, Francis departed from his prepared remarks to say that Benedict is "very sick" and asked the faithful to pray for the retired pontiff.

Francis didn't elaborate

on Benedict's condition.

"I would like to ask you all for a special prayer for Pope Emeritus Benedict, who is sustaining the church in silence," Francis said. "Remember him — he is very ill — asking the Lord to console him and to sustain him in this testimony to love for the church, until the end."

Francis also paid a visit to Benedict at the monastery four months ago. The occasion was Francis' latest ceremony elevating churchmen to cardinal rank, and the new "princes of the church" accompanied him to the monastery for the brief greeting.

The Vatican released a

photo at the time that showed a very thin-looking Benedict clasping Francis' hand as the current and past pontiff smiled at each other.

In his first years of retirement, Benedict attended a couple of cardinal-elevating ceremonies in St. Peter's Basilica. But in recent years, he wasn't strong enough to attend the long services.

He was elevated to cardinal rank in 1977 by the then-pontiff, Paul VI. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the German priest and theologian long served as the Vatican's doctrinal orthodox watchdog. He was elected pontiff in 2005.

Benedict started a room

dedicated his post-papacy life to prayer and meditation.

When Benedict turned 95 in April, his longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, said the retired pontiff was in good spirits, adding that "naturally he is physically relatively weak and fragile, but rather lucid."

He was elected to cardinal rank in 1977 by the then-pontiff, Paul VI. As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the German priest and theologian long served as the Vatican's doctrinal orthodox watchdog. He was elected pontiff in 2005.

Benedict started a room

Chechens in Bosnia seek to dodge Russian draft

Associated Press

Sarajevo, December 28

A group of ethnic Chechens fleeing Russia arrived in Bosnia this week, hoping to use the Balkan country as a launchpad to reach the European Union and avoid getting sent to fight in Ukraine.

The group of some 50 people, predominantly from Russia's Chechnya region, congregated near Bosnia's northwestern border with EU-member Croatia, the Bosnian Security Ministry said today. They want to reach the European Union because, in their own words, they are fleeing military draft in Russia, at the ministry said. Russians can enter Bosnia without a visa and are permitted to stay in the country for a


maximum of 90 days within a 180-day period. But to enter Croatia, which is set to join Europe's visa-free travel zone, the Schengen Area, on Jan. 1, they must hold a valid visa. The ethnic Chechens gathered near the Maljevac border crossing, in the northwest Bosnia's Krajina region include families with children. Many of the people waiting said they hoped to be allowed into Croatia. However, Croatian border guards mostly appeared to be turning them back.

According to Bosnian media, the Chechens arrived in Bosnia from Serbia, one of the only countries in Europe with direct flights from Russia during the war. The Security Ministry said it would "continue to monitor the situation on

the ground and gather detailed information from law enforcement agencies... to propose appropriate measures to maintain a secure situation."

Bosnia became a bottleneck for Europe-bound migrants from the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa in 2015, when other nations in the Balkans and central Europe closed off previously established migration paths in the region.

The Krajina region, which lies partly along a highly porous segment of Bosnia's border with Croatia, has struggled for years to accommodate transient migrants and refugees, at times leaving thousands of people to sleep outside without access to food, heat or medical care.

Vacancy Announcement	
Job Category	Computer Operator/Clerk
No. of Vacancy	15 Nos. (Male-Female)
Job Location	Sinamangal, Kathmandu
Offered Monthly Salary	NRS. 20,000 - 25,000/-
Job Specification	
Education Level	Intermediate
Experience Required	More than or equals to 2 years in related field.
Professional Skill Required	Communication/Problem Solving/Time Management/ Computer Operation
Other Specification	
• Should have basic computer knowledge (Mailing, MS Word, Excel, internet, report making, Data Entry)	
• Great written and verbal communication ability	
• Good command in written and spoken English.	
• Understanding of machine operations, functionality and processing	
• Fast typing skill in both Nepali and English	
• Customer service attitude	
Job Description	
A working knowledge of personal computer operating systems and software packages, such as Word and Excel, is required.	
• Follow technical instructions as well as understand and follow verbal technical instructions are required.	
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Application procedure

Interested and qualified consulting firms are requested to submit a Letter of Interest (LoI) and detailed technical and financial proposals in sealed envelopes. Detailed ToR can be obtained from our site: <http://www.practicalaction.org/jobs>.

Please send the sealed proposal marked as "To assess the financial and digital financial landscape as well as to identify barriers of women and marginalised groups to support development and uptake of digital financial products and services" to the following address no later than 1700 hrs, 06 January 2023.

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