



INTERNATIONAL

A New Approach To Refugees: Pay Them To Go Home

158,000. That's roughly how many refugees are stuck in limbo in Europe right now. Many of them got to Europe in late 2015, when the refugee crisis reached its peak, and have been waiting since then to see if they'll be formally accepted into the European Union. To cut down on the wait time and economic impact of this massive influx, some countries and nonprofits in Europe have embraced a new idea — pay refugees to go back to the countries they left in the first place. Mahmoud Abdelwahab is one of the people who has been waiting. He's 25, and originally from Mosul, Iraq. In early 2016, he quit his job as a cook and came to Europe, ending up in Vienna. "He saw people dying on the trip, like capsizing or falling from the boat into the sea," Philipp Epaïd says. Epaïd is Abdelwahab's counselor at Caritas, the nonprofit that provides refugee services to people in Austria who are returning home. Abdelwahab filled out his application to stay in Austria almost two years ago. Since then, nothing. All he could do — legally — was wait in a refugee camp. This is a big problem a lot of people waiting for asylum have: They aren't allowed to get a job, which means Mahmoud couldn't send money back to his family. "He wants to work. He wants to learn the language, and if you have no chance to do this, you're stuck and you get tired," Epaïd says. Abdelwahab says he spent two years all alone, feeling like a failure. And that the odds of getting asylum are stacked against him. He's not wrong — the Austrian courts have been overwhelmed by applications. When the migrant crisis reached its peak back in 2015, the number of people wanting to stay in Austria tripled. Instead of waiting longer, Mahmoud late last year made a tough decision. He decided to leave Austria and go back to Iraq. "He saw other Iraqi people receiving the negative decision that they have to go back," Epaïd says. "And that's why he decided for himself to back, before he got a negative." That decision — to voluntarily leave the country — is exactly what the Austrian government wants refugees to do. Last spring, Austria announced that it would give 1,000 euros to the first 1,000 refugees who signed up to leave on their own. The program was successful, and the government extended the offer to more refugees. It's an incentive that's gaining traction across Europe. "Either they choose the voluntary option or we have to discuss the forced option," says Karl-Heinz Groendbock, the spokesman for the Austrian Interior Ministry. That's the department that's funding the voluntary program. "Whenever it comes to forced return, we're talking about arresting people. It means we also have detention centers for people waiting for forced return." Groendbock says it's a lot cheaper to give someone a one-way flight and 1,000 euros than using the country's resources to deport them. And, he adds, when there are more applications, there will be more rejections. So, the government has wanted to encourage more refugees to return home — a decision thousands of refugees made in 2017. But is paying them really in the best interest of refugees? Philipp Epaïd, Abdelwahab's counselor, is not sure. He says it's really important that a refugee makes a life-changing decision like this one on his own. But this program is exactly why Mahmoud Abdelwahab chose to return home to Iraq — voluntarily.

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Yemen Prime Minister Holed Up As Separatists Seize Most Of Key Southern City

The South Yemen flag, for years a relic of the country's fragmented past, billowed brightly once more above pickup trucks and tanks patrolling the key southern city of Aden on Tuesday. Black clouds of smoke billowed across the city's skyline, too. Troops loyal to the Southern Transitional Council, a separatist group seeking to reclaim southern independence, have seized most of Aden from the forces of Yemen's internationally recognized government. The intense fighting, which erupted Sunday between the two former allies, has left the presidential palace in the city surrounded — and the cabinet, including Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Bin Daghar, holed up inside. Bin Daghar and Yemen's president-in-exile, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, have described the violence as a coup against the country's proper authorities. The STC, for its part, claims it delivered Hadi the ultimatum to sack his senior officials because those officials have allowed rampant corruption to badly erode public services. Though the violence between them calmed to a degree Tuesday, the International Committee of the Red Cross reports the fighting — which included "heavy guns and light artillery" — has claimed at least 36 lives and left another 185 wounded. The past few days' gunfire also claimed another, less tangible casualty: the tenuous alliance shared by the southern separatists and Hadi's government, forged in the opening days of the war against the Houthi rebels. The Shiite rebel group overran much of the country's northwest — including the capital, Sanaa, where it seized power from Hadi's regime in 2015 — but it failed to make inroads in Yemen's southern regions, mainly due to the uneasy partnership shared by Hadi and the separatists. Now, that partnership appears shattered. And the broken pact threatens to undermine still another, the Saudi-led Arab coalition that has been conducting an airstrike campaign intended to dislodge the Shiite Houthis since 2015. Saudi Arabia backs Yemeni President Hadi, who has stayed in Riyadh since his ouster. At the same time, a key member of that coalition, the United Arab Emirates, has closely backed the STC with an eye toward maintaining crucial oil shipping routes in Yemen's south. On Tuesday, coalition members projected a united front. "The coalition again requests all parties to speed up the cessation of all clashes immediately and the end of all armed manifestations," the group said in a statement translated by the state-run Saudi Press Agency, "and the coalition confirms that it will take all necessary measures to restore security and stability in Aden." The U.S., which has at times supported the Saudi-led airstrike campaign with logistical and targeting support, echoed the coalition sentiment Tuesday. "We call on all parties to refrain from escalation and further bloodshed. We also call for dialogue among all parties in Aden to reach a political solution," State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said in a statement. "The Yemeni people are already facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Additional divisions and violence within Yemen will only increase their suffering. A political dialogue represents the only way to achieve a more stable, unified, and prosperous Yemen."



NATIONAL

With Thousands of Homeless Students, This District Put Help Right In Its Schools

Mike Moran, the principal at Bryan Adams High School in Dallas, says oftentimes when students are homeless, they're too embarrassed to tell anyone. "A lot of times it is revealed that there's a temporary living situation, they're in a motel, they're now staying with an aunt and uncle," he says. Principal Moran has heard similar stories about 50, or so, kids at his school, just one of dozens of high schools in the district. That's why Dallas schools have put something called a drop-in center at nearly every high school in the district. At Bryan Adams, the drop-in center is a converted classroom that offers a lot that a homeless student might need: coffee, packaged foods, deodorant, a new backpack, even counseling. Some local non-profits lend supplies and volunteers. "They're trying to make ends meet and are having a hard time making it," Moran says about his students. Across the district, there are an estimated 3,600 homeless students. Moran suspects this drop-in center could serve up to 200 kids at Bryan Adams, about 10 percent of the student body, where 90 percent are economically disadvantaged. Jody Martin works at the school and hopes word spreads quickly about the center, "I mean, even if it's a kid just hearing that 'Hey, there's, you know, muffins and apple juice,' and they're going to know there are resources out there." Martin grew up in Australia and says she wishes she'd had a drop-in center as a kid. "I didn't have support at home ... You just need to know someone cares, because you don't have that at home." Kameron is a senior at Bryan Adams — we aren't using his last name to protect his privacy — and he calls the drop-in center a *big deal*. Especially, he says, for kids without parents in the picture. "It also helps them if they need food, or they can't stay with their friends ... then help them go to a homeless shelter." Kameron has needed all those services himself. He says his dad has been out of the picture for years and he had to leave home when things got bad with his mom. At that point, he qualified as homeless and needed help. He's now back home with his mom and is thinking ahead to college. "I am shooting for something outside of the state – something new, pretty much," he says.

Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, Oldest Son Of Cuban Leader, Takes His Own Life

Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, the eldest son of the late Cuban leader Fidel Castro, has taken his own life, Cuba's state media reports. The 68-year-old "Fidelito," or "Little Fidel," as he was known, had been hospitalized for depression and was still being treated as an outpatient at the time of his suicide, according to Cuba's official newspaper, *Granma*. Castro Díaz-Balart was the only son of Fidel and his first wife, Mirta Díaz-Balart, who were divorced before the Cuban revolution. As a child, he was the subject of a nasty custody battle — with his mother, having kidnapped and moving with him to live in New York. He eventually landed back in Cuba when after his father seized power in 1959. Castro Díaz-Balart was trained in the Soviet Union as a nuclear physicist and served as a scientific adviser to Cuba's Council of State. Many Cubans remember him as a little boy dressed in an olive drab military uniform, accompanying his father on January 8, 1959 as he entered Havana triumphantly after the revolution. The younger Castro was always faithful to his father's communist ideals.

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A federal judge has declared unconstitutional Florida's procedure for restoring voting rights to felons who have served their time. In a strongly worded ruling seen as a rebuke of Republican Gov. Rick Scott, who is the lead defendant in the case, U.S. District Judge Mark Walker said the disenfranchisement of felons who have served their time is "nonsensical" and a violation of the First and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Although nearly every state bars incarcerated criminals from voting, only Florida and three others — Iowa, Kentucky and Virginia — do not automatically restore voting rights at the completion of a criminal sentence. Walker, an Obama administration appointee, decried the state's requirement that someone with a felony conviction must "kowtow" to a partisan panel, the Office of Executive Clemency, "over which Florida's governor has absolute veto authority" to regain their right to vote. "[Elected], partisan officials have extraordinary authority to grant or withhold the right to vote from hundreds of thousands of people without any constraints, guidelines, or standards," the judge said. "Its members alone must be satisfied that these citizens deserve restoration. ... The question now is whether such a system passes constitutional muster. It does not," he said. The suit was brought by The Fair Elections Legal Network, a voting rights group, on behalf of nine felons. The decision could have repercussions for a state that is deeply divided along partisan lines and that has increasingly become a cliffhanger in presidential elections. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, 1.5 million Floridians are currently ineligible to vote due to past felony convictions. According to The Tampa Bay Times, "Scott was the principal architect of the current system that requires all felons to wait at least five years after they complete their sentences, serve probation and pay all restitution, to apply for [the] right to vote and other civil rights."

Federal weather officials say that California is headed into another drought with severely dry conditions in three counties that are home to one-quarter of the state's population. That assessment, released Thursday by the U.S. Drought Monitor, says that 44 percent of the state is experiencing a moderate drought. State researchers independently measure the Sierra Mountains snowpack which accounts for about a 30 percent of California's water supply. State officials say the snowpack is less than about a third of normal for this time of the year. Less than a year ago, state officials lifted a state of emergency when a rainy winter in northern California interrupted five years of chronic drought that necessitated mandatory, and unpopular, conservation measures. However, residents in some areas of southern California say the drought never really ended for them. Southern California has seen only one major storm this season and warm temperatures most commonly associated with June are blanketing the region now. The lack of rain in Ventura, Santa Barbara and Los Angeles counties contributed to the conditions leading to the recent catastrophic wildfires. But state officials aren't giving up hope on this season yet, reports the Associated Press: "A bright spot, said Doug Carlson, spokesman for the state's Department of Water Resources, which carries out the snowpack surveys, was that reservoirs remain fuller than usual thanks to last year's rain in the state's north."



STATE

Wisconsin Teen Sentenced To 40 Years In Mental Hospital For 'Slender Man' Stabbing

A Wisconsin girl who pleaded guilty to stabbing a classmate as part of a bizarre attempt to gain favor with a fictional Internet character has been ordered committed to a mental institution for 40 years, the maximum penalty sought by prosecutors. Morgan Geysler had pleaded guilty to attempted first-degree murder in the near-fatal stabbing of Payton Leutner. Geysler's cohort, Anissa Weier, pleaded guilty to being a party to the crime and was sentenced in December to 25 years in a mental institution. All three girls, including the victim, were 12 at the time of the stabbing. Geysler and Weier, now teenagers, were tried as adults. Leutner survived the attack. "I just want to let Bella and her family know that I'm sorry," a tearful Geysler said, using Leutner's nickname. "And I hope she's doing well." The two girls apparently carried out the attack to impress a horror character known as Slender Man. In the spring of 2014, Geysler and Weier lured Leutner to the woods in Waukesha, attacked her and left her to die. "The victim was able to crawl from the site of the attack and flag down a bicyclist who came to her aid." "Weier and ... Geysler said they planned the stabbing in order to please the Internet horror character Slender Man. Attorneys for Weier argued that she believed Slender Man would harm her family if she did not attack her classmate." Attorneys for Weier said she believed Slender Man would hurt her family if she did not go through with the attack on Leutner. During testimony in October, Geysler cried as she told Judge Michael Bohren: "Anissa and I took [Leutner] in the forest and said that we were going to play hide-and-seek." "Anissa said that she couldn't do it and that I had to," Geysler said, referring to the stabbing. Bohren asked how Geysler carried out the attack, to which she replied: "I tackled her. I stabbed her." Where? Bohren asked. "Everywhere," Geysler replied. How many times? "19." "Anissa told her to lie down so she wouldn't lose blood so quickly, and told her to be quiet, and we left," Geysler said.

GOP enthusiasm cools for Walker's proposed child credit

Republican enthusiasm for Gov. Scott Walker's proposed \$122 million child rebate appears to be cooling. Walker proposed Wednesday giving every family \$100 for each child living at home under age 18. The money would be delivered this fall, shortly before he stands for re-election. Republican Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald said Thursday it will take some time to see if senators want to pass it. He says the proposal needs to "sit in the sun for a couple of days and we'll see what it does for the momentum of it." Conservative talk radio host Jay Weber blasted the idea on Twitter saying the idea "reeks" of "vote buying" and "game playing" that Republicans have long criticized Democrats for doing. Assembly Republican Speaker Robin Vos said Wednesday he was "very confident" the idea would quickly pass.



Walker Would Consider Gas Tax Hike To Access Federal Road Money

Gov. Scott Walker is signaling a possible new willingness to raise the state's gas tax in order to tap into a proposed \$1.5 trillion federal infrastructure spending package. Walker made the remarks Thursday after President Donald Trump called for a massive increase in road funding during his State of the Union address. Trump said, "Every federal dollar should be leveraged by partnering with state and local governments and, where appropriate, tapping into private sector investment to permanently fix the infrastructure deficit." In Wisconsin, Walker and some Republican lawmakers have been at odds over how to fund transportation projects statewide. Walker opposed raising the gas tax for road repairs during last year's budget deliberations. The current budget includes \$402 million in borrowing for roads while some projects have been delayed. On Thursday, Walker said he would consider raising revenues to access federal money for infrastructure improvements, and expressed hope that the federal government would provide support similar to the traditional 80 percent funding level with a 20 percent match from the state. At the same time, Walker denied it was a reversal of his earlier position. "My position is exactly the same as it was four years ago when I talked in 2014 before I stood for election, which was I said any revenue increase in the (state) Department of Transportation budget would have to be offset by equal or greater reduction somewhere else so that the overall tax burden would not raise on the people of the state of Wisconsin," said Walker. A White House fact sheet on the administration's transportation initiative outlined that the federal government should support communities that move toward "a model of independence" in raising revenues for infrastructure. The level of matching funds required by state and local governments will be a key factor in whether significant investment can move forward, said Jerry Deschane, executive director for the Wisconsin League of Municipalities. "Some of the earlier reports I saw were that the feds were going to provide 20 percent and leave it to local governments to come up with 80 percent. If that's what actually gets passed by Congress, this won't work in Wisconsin at all," he said. Local government budgets are already stretched thin when it comes to any additional expenses, said Deschane. Even so, some local leaders say they've been forced to become more independent in funding infrastructure needs. Some counties, cities and towns have resorted to borrowing or raising the tax levy as state and federal support has dwindled, including the town of Summit in Douglas County. "It is the towns. It is the counties that end up putting their money out to get money back. I appreciate the money we get from the feds, but it's always got some kind of strings on it. Then, when we deal with our state government, we got caps on everything," said town chairman Dan Corbin. "We can only spend so much money. If we can't get it done in that amount of money, then we have to turn around and postpone it, find another way to raise it, go back to our towns to raise it. That's tough money. Taxes are high enough the way they are." As part of its infrastructure initiative, the Trump administration is encouraging more public-private partnerships to fund projects. However, private entities that fund public projects need some sort of mechanism to recoup their investment, said Kevin Trass, director of policy with the Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association.



SPORTS

The Chicago Cubs have invited veteran catcher Chris Gimenez and 18 other non-roster players to their major league spring training camp. A nine-year veteran, Gimenez played for Chicago manager Joe Maddon when both were with Tampa Bay in 2012 and 2013 and was later a teammate of free agent pitcher Yu Darvish -- a Cubs target -- with the Texas Rangers. Chicago also invited pitchers Anthony Bass, Craig Brooks, David Garner, Justin Hancock, Thomas Hatch, Williams Perez, Alberto Baldonado, Daniel Camarena and Kyle Ryan; infielders Ryan Court, Mike Freeman, Jason Vosler and Chesny Young; catchers Taylor Davis, Ian Rice and Ali Solis; and outfielders Jacob Hannemann and Bijan Rademacher. Pitchers and catchers begin workouts Feb. 14, with the first full squad workout on Feb. 19.

Vladimir Guerrero will become the first player to wear an Angels hat on his Hall of Fame plaque. Guerrero spent more time in Montreal, leading many to think he would sport an Expos cap. Guerrero made the announcement Thursday, a day after he was elected to the Hall by an overwhelming margin. The Hall gets the final say on how a player is depicted in the plaque gallery in Cooperstown, New York. The slugger played the first eight seasons of his career in Montreal. He joined the Anaheim Angels as a free agent in 2004 and spent six seasons with them, including their rebranding as the Los Angeles Angels. The Angels began play in 1961. Reggie Jackson is among those who played for the Angels but has a different cap in the Hall. Guerrero was a four-time All-Star with both teams. He hit .323 with 234 home runs for Montreal and batted .319 with 173 homers for the Angels. Gary Carter, Andre Dawson and Tim Lincecum are the only players with Montreal hats on their bronze plaques in the Hall.

Tiger Woods is starting his PGA Tour season at Torrey Pines, just like the old days. Only these are far different circumstances. Instead of high expectations for Woods, Thursday at the Farmers Insurance Open was more about curiosity. He is returning after fusion surgery on his lower back last April, his fourth back operation in three years. When he tried to return after a 16-month break last year at Torrey Pines, he missed the 36-hole cut. This will be only his second PGA Tour event since August 2015. Woods has won this PGA Tour seven times. He also won the U.S. Open at Torrey Pines in 2008, along with a Junior World Championship as a teenager. The difference from last year is Woods no longer has pain in his back.

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) -- Even though they both lost today in the Australian Open semifinals, Angelique Kerber and Elise Mertens will see big jumps in their rankings next week. Former No. 1 Kerber, who lost to Simona Halep, is projected to break back into the top 10 for the first time since last August, rising seven places to No. 9. Mertens is expected to rise to a career-high ranking of No. 20 with her first appearance in a Grand Slam semifinal.



WEATHER

- **This Afternoon:** Sunny, with a high near 33. Northwest wind around 18 mph.
- **Tonight:** Mostly clear, with a low around 10. Wind chill values as low as zero. Northwest wind 9 to 15 mph, with gusts as high as 29 mph.
- **Friday:** Mostly sunny, with a high near 27. Wind chill values as low as zero. Southwest wind 8 to 10 mph, with gusts as high as 21 mph.
- **Friday Night:** Increasing clouds, with a low around 24. Southwest wind 7 to 9 mph.
- **Saturday:** A chance of snow before 10am, then rain likely. Cloudy, with a high near 43. South wind 9 to 14 mph, with gusts as high as 24 mph. Chance of precipitation is 60%.
- **Saturday Night:** Rain likely before 5am, then a slight chance of rain and snow. Cloudy, with a low around 34. Chance of precipitation is 70%.
- **Sunday:** Partly sunny, with a high near 40.
- **Sunday Night:** Partly cloudy, with a low around 19.

COMMERCIALS

Selling alcohol to people under 21 is illegal, yet today alcohol is the number one killer of teens in our nation. Students Against Destructive Decisions is asking the community to put a stop to underage drinking. We are working with Licensed Beverage Outlets in the community on a campaign entitled **21 or Bust**. [INSERT STATION NAME/CALL LETTERS] and SADD want you to know that selling or providing alcohol to someone under 21 can result in fines, imprisonment, a permanent criminal record, or even a death. Do your part to spread the warning message – **21 or Bust**.

Sound FX: [Pounding gavel]

Bailiff: Okay, okay, settle down. The judge will now hear the case of the people versus Mr. Dominic Franchella of Stanford Ford-Lincoln for his involvement in too many smiles.

Prosecutor: Mr. Franchella, is it true that you plan to make every person in the tri-state area smile uncontrollably?

Mr. Franchella: That is correct, sir.

Prosecutor: And is it also true that you plan to hold a "Miles of Smiles" event that will allow thousands to buy new Fords at one dollar over manufacturer invoice?

Mr. Franchella: That is also correct.

Prosecutor: Well, your honor... I believe Mr. Franchella owes everyone an explanation!

Mr. Franchella: C'mon down to Stanford Ford-Lincoln today through March 10th for the Miles of Smiles event, and pay just \$1 over manufacturer invoice for a new car! We're just miles off exit 8 on I-94, or on the web at stanfordford.com