

ROW OVER UN REPORT ON GAZA FLOTILLA RAID

Turkey to take Israel to UN court

BBC ONLINE

Turkey said yesterday that it will challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

It is the latest sign of strain between the countries since last year's Israeli action against ships heading for Gaza, in which nine Turks were killed.

Foreign Minister Ahmed Davutoglu said Turkey did not accept the findings of a UN report which said Israel's blockade of Gaza was a legal security measure.

His comments came a day after Turkey expelled the Israeli ambassador. It also halted military co-operation with Israel.

Speaking on state-run Turkish TV, Mr Davutoglu said the UN report, prepared by former New Zealand Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer and former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, had not been endorsed by the UN and was therefore not binding.

"What is binding is the ICJ," he went

on. "This is what we are saying: let the ICJ decide."

Turkey, he added, would start the necessary legal procedures in the coming week.

Based in The Hague, the ICJ is a permanent UN court set up to rule on state-to-state disputes.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon insisted his country had nothing to apologise for and had done all it could to avoid a crisis with Turkey.

He said the Turks seemed to want to raise tensions with Israel for its own reasons.

The US state department has said Washington hopes Turkey and Israel "will continue to look for opportunities to improve their longstanding relationship".

The nine pro-Palestinian activists who died were on board the Turkish-flagged ship, Mavi Marmara, when it was intercepted by the Israeli navy in

international waters as it sailed towards Gaza's coast on 31 May 2010.

At the time, the Israeli military said its commandos fired live rounds only after being attacked with clubs, knives and guns. But activists on board said the commandos started shooting as soon as they hit the deck.

The UN inquiry found Israel's naval blockade had been "imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law".

But it also said Israel's decision to board the vessels "with such substantial force at a great distance from the blockade zone and with no final warning immediately prior to the boarding was excessive and unreasonable".

The report noted "forensic evidence showing that most of the deceased were shot multiple times, including in the back, or at close range".

Police clash with UK far-right activists

Sixty arrested

BBC ONLINE

Police clashed with English Defence League (EDL) members and arrested sixty of its in east London yesterday.

Police said 16 arrests were made during a demonstration by the group, while 44 people on a coach were held later on suspicion of violent disorder.

The protest went ahead despite a ban on marches in the area, with police estimating 1,000 EDL supporters and 1,500 counter-protesters had gathered.

Missiles were thrown by activists as 3,000 police tried to maintain control.

The supporters of the EDL, which says it is protesting against Islamic extremism in the UK, clashed with the counter-protesters near Aldgate Tubestation, east London.

Israelis step up economic protest

Biggest rally in history presses PM

REUTERS, Tel Aviv

Hundreds of thousands marched Saturday for lower living costs in the largest such rally in Israel's history, bolstering a social change movement and mounting pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to take on economic reform.

Protest leaders called it "the moment of truth" for the grassroots movement that has swollen since July from a cluster of student tent-squatters into a countrywide mobilization of Israel's middle class.

"An entire generation wants a future," read one banner as demonstrators flooded the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and cities throughout Israel, shouting "the people demand social justice."

Netanyahu has warned he would not be able to satisfy all the protesters' demands, ranging from tax cuts, to expansion of free education and bigger government housing budgets.

Organizers said over 450,000 people took part in the demonstrations. Police put the number at least 300,000.

Protests on that scale in Israel, with a population of 7.7 million, are usually held over issues of war and peace.

"Tonight is the pinnacle moment of a historic protest," Amir Rochman, 30, an activist from Israel's Green Party said.

"Israel will no longer be the same," Itzik Shmuli, head of the National Student Union and one of the protest leaders said at the rally. "Our new Israel demands real change in the priorities of its government."



AFTER SEX SCANDAL Strauss-Kahn back in Paris

AFP, Paris

Dominique Strauss-Kahn returned to Paris yesterday for the first time since a New York hotel maid accused him of attempted rape in a sensational sex scandal that scuppered his hopes for the French presidency.

The former IMF chief and his journalist wife Anne Sinclair arrived at dawn at Charles de Gaulle airport on an Air France flight and were whisked off in a black Peugeot to their apartment in the chic Place des Vosges.

Strauss-Kahn, dressed in a dark suit and white shirt, boarded the flight at New York's JFK International airport late Saturday, less than two weeks after sexual assault charges against him were dropped.

However he made no comment to the waiting journalists.

The 62-year-old resigned as the International Monetary Fund's managing director in May after he was arrested at JFK airport and charged with the sexual assault and attempted rape of the Sofitel hotel maid, Nafissatou Diallo.

The Socialist politician, known in France by his initials DSK, spent nearly a week in jail, and was then put under house arrest for six weeks and barred from leaving the United States.

But last week he walked free when a judge dismissed charges against him after prosecutors said they could not pursue the case because the accuser's lies had made it impossible to prove her accusations beyond a reasonable doubt.

NEWS IN brief

Cuban defence chief, top aide to Raul Castro, dies

AFP, Havana

Cuban Defence Minister General Julio Casas Regueiro, the right-hand man of President Raul Castro, died of a heart attack in Havana on Saturday, state media reported. He was 75.

Casas Regueiro, one of Cuba's most powerful men though his influence was wielded largely behind the scenes, is replaced under national regulations by his first deputy, General Leopoldo Cita Frias.

Casas was one of Cuba's five vice presidents, and had served on the Communist Party's policymaking politburo since 1991.



South Sudan to move capital to Lakes state

AFP, Juba

The government of newly-independent South Sudan has decided to relocate its capital from Juba to a more central location in Lakes state, a senior official said yesterday.

"The council of ministers has decided that the capital city will be relocated from Juba," the government's secretary general Abdon Agaw told AFP, adding the new capital would be located in Ramciel, in Lakes state.

The decision, taken on Friday, has to be approved by the parliament of South Sudan, which gained its independence July 9, and is unlikely to result in any imminent change as the new capital would have to

Iran nuclear plant linked to grid

AFP, Tehran

Iran's first nuclear power plant has been hooked up to the national grid supplying 60 megawatts of its 1,000 megawatt capacity, the country's Atomic Energy Organisation announced yesterday.

The connection of the Russian-built plant in southern Iran to the national grid was originally scheduled for the end of 2010.

In mid-August, Iran's atomic organisation chief Fereydoon Abbasi Davani said the plant was expected to reach "full capacity of 1,000 megawatts"

Iran kills 30 Kurd rebels

REUTERS, Tehran

Iran said its troops killed or wounded 30 Kurdish rebels in a fresh assault on the mountainous border with Iraq where witnesses reported fierce fighting and shelling on Saturday.

A commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards said the military push was launched after giving the rebels a one-month "grace period" during Ramadan to withdraw from the area from where they have launched ambushes and sabotage attacks on gas pipelines.

PJAK is an offshoot of the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), which has been pounded by Turkish air strikes in recent weeks.

Hundreds of people have fled their homes in the area to small camps since mid-July.



Some of an estimated 400,000 Israelis hold banners as they demonstrate in the centre of Tel Aviv on Saturday to protest against rising housing prices and social inequalities in the Jewish state.

PHOTO: AFP

20 killed as ICRC chief starts Syria mission

AFP, Damascus

At least 20 people died in violence across Syria yesterday, activists and state media said, as the visiting Red Cross chief sought access to those detained in five months of anti-regime protests.

Six soldiers and three civilians were killed when an "armed group" opened fire on a bus in Maharda, central Syria, state news agency SANA reported.

SANA said a security patrol killed three of the assailants and seriously wounded a fourth.

The Local Coordination Committees (LCC), which groups anti-regime activists on the ground, said security forces shot dead three people in the Khan Sheikhwan area of Idlib province in northwest Syria.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) chief Jakob Kellenberger flew into Damascus on Saturday for talks with President Bashar al-Assad over access to prisoners and areas of unrest.

According to activists, 27 people were killed in operations by the army and security services across Syria on Friday and Saturday.

The latest bloodshed came as European ministers warned of more sanctions in addition to an oil embargo over Syria's defiance of mounting international calls to halt a deadly crackdown on anti-Assad protests.



CNN ONLINE

In the Ukraine house where she grew up, Oksana Balinskaya's hazel eyes transfixed on television images of Muammar Gaddafi.

He was now a fallen leader, a fugitive sought for justice. He had been known as the ruthless leader of a pariah state, a butcher, a delusional man divorced from reality.

But Balinskaya, 25, who served as one of Gaddafi's five Ukrainian nurses for nearly two years, had always seen him in a different light.

She even called him "Daddy." All the Ukrainian nurses did.

"Daddy gave us jobs, money and a good life," she said.

Far removed now from the sands of Libya, Balinskaya sat at the kitchen table with her Serbian husband, looking upward at the boxy TV set atop the refrigerator. Images of Gaddafi's fiery defiance flashed in the face of ouster.

She would feel sorry for him if he

were killed or captured, she said.

She took turns with the other nurses accompanying him on foreign trips, sometimes sparking rumours spread in the media about Gaddafi's harem.

All of what was being said about Gaddafi seemed contrary to what she knew about the man -- including the allegations by Gaddafi family nannies and domestic staff that they were tortured and abused.

"Gaddafi was quite considerate to us," she said. "He would ask us whether we are happy and whether we have everything that we need."

Her job now lost to Libya's civil war, she pitied the nation.

"If it were not for Gaddafi, who else would have built it?" she said. "It was he who constructed it. He has transferred Libyans from camelbacks into cars."

The rules were strict while working as a nurse for Gaddafi. The attractive Ukrainian nurses wore no flashy makeup or revealing clothes.

Life with 'Daddy'

Nurse unveils a different side of Gaddafi

He was always surrounded by others -- Gaddafi's wife, children, grandchildren, officials within his inner circle.

"None of us had ever been one on one with him," she said. "There wasn't even a single room in his household where we could have possibly been left alone with him."

That's why she was shocked by the gossip that Gaddafi had sexual relationships with his foreign nurses.

Veteran Ukrainian nurse, Galina Kolonitskaya, 38, who had worked with Gaddafi for nearly a decade, was described in a US diplomatic cable posted by WikiLeaks as a "voluptuous blonde" who "knows his routine." It said the Libyan dictator was deeply attached to her.

"I can only say good things about him," she said. "I very much hope that we will return to Libya," she said, flipping through an album with photographs of herself in Libya.

Storm makes landfall in Louisiana

AFP, Miami

Tropical Storm Lee made landfall in the southern US state of Louisiana yesterday, bringing with it torrential rains threatening floods in parts of the country, US government forecasters said.

Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has declared a state of emergency, saying flooding was the state's "primary concern."

Lee came ashore just 50 miles southwest of Lafayette, packing sustained winds of 45 miles per hour, the Miami-based National Hurricane Centre said.

Oil companies evacuated workers from offshore rigs ahead of the arrival of Lee, a disorganized but major rainmaker.



PHOTO: AFP

View of the airport in Juan Fernandez island where a Chilean air force plane carrying 21 people crashed and people pay tributes to the victims of the tragedy, inset.

All 21 aboard dead in Chile plane crash

AFP, Santiago

All 21 people aboard the Chilean air force plane that crashed into the Pacific on its way to a remote archipelago died instantaneously, the defence minister said Saturday.

A major search operation had been launched late Friday in the waters around Robinson Crusoe island in the Juan Fernandez islands, some 700 kilometres west of the South American coastline, and some debris from the missing plane has been located in the sea.

As Chile's navy and air force headed the search, fishermen in their boats left the archipelago early Saturday in the hope of turning up survivors.

Sudan shut down all SPLM-North offices

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan on Saturday shut down all the offices of the country's largest opposition party, the SPLM-North, charging that it was not a legally represented political party, two of its members said.

The move comes a day after fighting erupted in Blue Nile state between the army and ex-rebel troops loyal to the elected governor, Malik Agar, the SPLM-North's chairman, who President Omar al-Bashir sacked from his job on Friday after declaring a state of emergency.

"At seven o'clock this evening (1600 GMT) I went to the SPLM head office in Khartoum where I found members of the security forces who informed me that all the SPLM offices in north Sudan have been closed," senior party member Muatassim Hakim told AFP.

The Sudanese body responsible for registering political parties had declared that the northern branch of the SPLM, the former rebel movement turned ruling party in the newly-independent south, was not a legal party because it was not registered in Sudan, Hakim quoted the security officers as saying.

Another party source, requesting anonymity, said he was informed by a number of plainclothes security officers that all the SPLM-North's activities had been suspended, "because they said our party is not a legal, registered party."