

Stop Gaza war

China urges Israel to lift Gaza blockade

AFP, Cairo

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday called on Israel and the Palestinian militant group Hamas to stop fighting and urged the Jewish state to lift its blockade of Gaza.

Wang made his comments at a press conference with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukri, whose government is hosting a Palestinian delegation for ceasefire talks snubbed by Israel.

"Both sides, the Israeli and the Palestinian, should immediately and comprehensively cease fire, including air strikes, ground operations and rocket fire to save the people and peace in the region," said Wang, whose comments were translated into Arabic.

"All actions that involve excessive use of force and that lead to civilian casualties are unacceptable."

Wang also said Israel "should lift its blockade on Gaza, release Palestinian prisoners (but) at the same time Israel's security concerns must be considered".

China will provide \$ 1.5 million in urgent humanitarian aid to war-battered Gaza, he added.

A Palestinian delegation of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Palestinian Authority was in Cairo for talks, although Israel said it will not send anyone to the negotiations.

Cairo, the traditional broker in conflicts between Israel and Hamas, invited Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to thrash out a durable truce in Gaza based on an Egyptian ceasefire proposal.

Wang said Beijing backs Cairo's ceasefire proposal and efforts undertaken by other countries to end the fighting in Gaza.



A Palestinian man carries an injured child following an Israeli military strike on a UN school in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. At least 10 people were killed in the strike which was sheltering Palestinians displaced by an Israeli military offensive.

BRIEF ON GAZA

Cut ties with Israel, demands Chile demo

AFP, Santiago

Thousands marched in Chile's capital Saturday against Israel's operation in Gaza, urging President Michelle Bachelet to break off diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

"We are asking President Michelle Bachelet to expel Israel's ambassador, and to end ties with Israel. We want the world to know Chileans have stood against this Israeli massacre," said Mauricio Abu-Gosh, head of the Palestinian Association of Chile.

Gaza situation 'intolerable': British FM

AFP, London

British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond yesterday demanded an unconditional ceasefire to resolve the "intolerable" situation in Gaza, adding that the British public was "deeply disturbed" by what it was seeing.

Hammond, who took over from William Hague last month, told the Sunday Telegraph that the killing had to stop, having already said he was "gravely concerned" by the number of civilian

Tutu joins campaign against Israel

AL-JAZEERA ONLINE

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the South African activist who fought to end apartheid, has joined a worldwide campaign calling on corporations profiting from Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territories to pull out their funding.

Tutu is among 1.5 million people who have joined the initiative, launched by the global campaign organisation Avaaz, as Israel continues its offensive against the Gaza Strip.

Shocking message on an Israeli bomb

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

It will be shocking if this image, tweeted by Israeli BDS campaigner (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Against Israel) Ronnie Barkan and picked up by Israel-Gaza news site Mondoweiss, is the genuine article.

The photograph depicts a mortar shell with the words "That's for cancelling the Backstreet Boys, you scum!" inscribed on its shaft in Hebrew.

The author, who appears to be a member of the IDF and a strident Backstreet fan, would have been referring to the recent rescheduling of the boyband's first ever string of dates in Tel Aviv, which were set to start 30 August.

The American pop group were

forced to cancel for safety reasons, as the tensions between Israel and Gaza grew and the Israeli government launched an aggressive offensive against the strip.



The source of the photograph appears to be a pro-Israel Defence Forces Facebook page, called 'Standing By IDF', which has notched up over 30,500 likes since it was founded on 23 July.

Children struggle to best war trauma

AFP, Jabaliya

Ask any child in Gaza to do a drawing and the resulting picture is likely to be a house being bombed by a fighter plane.

In the strife-torn Palestinian enclave, thousands of children are suffering from the trauma of war but resources to help them are scarce.

At a school in the northern town of Jabaliya which has been converted into a refuge, specialist teachers hand out paper and coloured crayons to a motley band of shaken up children, asking them to draw whatever is in their head.

Jamal Diab, a nine-year old with red flecks in his brown hair, draws his dead grandfather. Under the drawing, he writes in Arabic: "I am sad because of the martyrs."

Tiny seven-year old Bara Marouf shows a drawing of his grandfather without any legs. He was seriously wounded in an air strike.

In the classroom, the same sketch comes up repeatedly: an aircraft filling the sky and bombarding a house, subtitled with the



caption "I want to go home".

"Me, I'm afraid of missiles and planes. Half our house was destroyed. We left it to come here," explains Itimad Subh, an 11-year-old girl with sparkling eyes.

According to Unicef, about 300 children have been killed since the start on July 8 of Israel's offensive against Hamas militants firing rockets into the Jewish state.

Those who are still alive try not to internalise too much the violence they have experienced, seen and heard.

"The children have all lived extreme experiences," says Dr Iyad Zaqt, a psychia-

trist who manages the United Nations community mental health programmes in the Gaza Strip.

"To prevent children from processing and thinking about all these issues, we try to distract them, to help them live some joy, to have a little fun inside the shelter," Zaqt said.

In the Gaza Strip, 460,000 people -- more than a quarter of the population -- have been displaced by the fighting and have gone to stay with relatives or found refuge at UN shelters.

Fewer than 100 specialist teachers are "treating" more than 100,000 children.

Only in exceptional cases do the children have access to one-on-one meetings with psychologists and psychiatrists. And even fewer get a follow up.

UNICEF estimates that 326,000 minors in Gaza are in need of psychological help.

The children and adolescents sheltering in the UN centres can at least attend the group classes but hundreds of thousands of others affected by the war are left to wander unhelped through devastated neighbourhoods.

NEWSIN brief

Jihadists seize Iraqi town from Kurds

AFP, Sulaimaniyah

Fighters from the Islamic State jihadist group yesterday wrested control of the northwestern Iraqi town of Sinjar, near the Syrian border, from Kurdish forces, Kurdish officials said.

Other officials confirmed the fall of the town, which lies between the Syrian border and Mosul, which is Iraq's second city and has been under IS control since June 10.

India landslide death toll climbs to 92

AFP, New Delhi

Rescue workers yesterday discovered more bodies in the mud and debris of a devastating landslide in western India, taking the confirmed death toll to 92, an official said. With dozens more villagers still missing, rescue workers kept up their grim search for victims of the landslide which destroyed a remote village in Maharashtra state on July 30.

Nearly 100 killed in Xinjiang attacks

AFP, Beijing

Chinese state media said yesterday that 37 civilians and 59 "terrorists" had been killed in an attack earlier in the week in Xinjiang, home to China's mainly Muslim Uighur minority. Police had arrested 215 "terrorists" while 13 civilians were also wounded in Monday's attack on a police station and government offices in Shache county in Kashgar prefecture, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Four die in flash flood at Italy festival

AFP, Rome

After a sudden 10-minute burst of heavy rain during the local festival in Refrontolo near Venice, the Lierza river burst its banks, local officials and media reported yesterday, killing four people.



UKRAINE CRISIS

An Ukrainian girl cries as she stands on the road with her luggage after she left her home near the village of Hrabove in Donetsk amid heavy fighting. Inset, Ukrainian troops guard a checkpoint near the eastern Ukrainian city of Debaltseve in the Donetsk region yesterday. Clashes between government troops and separatists in Donetsk have killed six civilians as Kiev tightened the noose around the main stronghold of pro-Russia rebels in eastern Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

NEPAL LANDSLIDE

Hope fades for dozens missing

AFP, Kathmandu

Rescuers yesterday ruled out finding any more survivors of a landslide in northeast Nepal feared to have buried at least 100 people under tonnes of mud and rocks.

Nine bodies have been pulled from the rubble after the landslide caused by heavy monsoon rains smashed into hamlets along a river in Sindhupalchok district before dawn on Saturday, an official said.

"It has been over 24 hours that people would have been buried in mud. We have no hope of finding anyone alive," government disaster management head Yadav Prasad Koirala said.

"We recovered one more dead body, bringing our toll up to nine people," he told AFP after returning from the site on Sunday, adding "according to our data, 155 people are still missing."

Abdullah to rejoin Afghan polls audit

AFP, Kabul

Afghan presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah has agreed to rejoin an audit of the votes, UN officials said yesterday, after tense negotiations to keep the election on track amid a prolonged dispute over alleged fraud.

Abdullah's team "has informed the United Nations that it will... resume its participation in the audit process tomorrow," the UN said in a statement.

Earlier yesterday, the audit had restarted in Kabul without Abdullah's observers, who refused to attend due to disagreements over how votes would be judged as fraudulent.

The country's first democratic transfer of power has been engulfed in a crisis over alleged fraud, undermining hopes that the election would be a key achievement of the US-led military and civilian aid effort since 2001.

Instead, the battle between Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, an ex-World Bank economist, has threatened to spark a spiral of instability as Nato troops pull out and violence increases nationwide.

After Abdullah rejected preliminary results that named Ghani as the winner of the June 14 election, US Secretary of State John Kerry flew to Kabul and persuaded the two candidates to agree to the audit to sift out fraudulent votes.

More than eight million votes were cast on polling day, but Abdullah quickly lodged complaints that "industrial-scale" fraud had denied him victory.



Foreigners flee Libya amid deadly clashes

AFP, Tripoli

The exodus of foreigners from Libya gathered pace yesterday as the government said at least 22 people were killed in clashes in Tripoli and warned of a "worsening humanitarian situation".

Thousands of Egyptians seeking to flee the strife-torn North African country were being airlifted home after being allowed into neighbouring Tunisia, many after a wait of several days at a border crossing.

And a British navy ship was evacuating Britons from Tripoli, the defence ministry in London said.

The latest flare-up, which broke out on Saturday, takes the death toll in Tripoli to 124 since July 13, with more than 500 wounded.

A medical source said the weekend casualty figures of 22 dead and 72 wounded did not cover hospitals outside Tripoli, in particular in the town of Misrata which has sent fighters to the capital.

The transitional government said "several hundred" families had been displaced and there was a "worsening humanitarian situation" in Tripoli, where petrol, bottled gas and food supplies are scarce.

Tripoli airport has been closed and several aircraft destroyed or damaged in

the clashes between rival militias which fought together in 2011 to help overthrow dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The unrest is seen as a struggle for influence, both between regions and political factions, as Libya plunges into chaos, with authorities failing to control the dozens of militias in the absence of a structured regular army and police force.

In Tunisia, buses started on Saturday to pick up Egyptian evacuees at the Ras Jedir border crossing to take them to Jerba airport, 100 kilometres north, for flights back to Egypt, AFP journalists said. Egypt's civil aviation minister, Hossam Kamal, said 1,796 people had been taken to Jerba and another 1,355 were to be transferred there on Sunday, with five flights home planned.

As of Saturday evening, about 6,000 people were awaiting evacuation and neither Libya, Egypt nor Tunisia could say on Sunday how many were still awaiting transport.

Tunisia had refused to admit people who were neither Libyan nor Tunisian unless they could prove they would be immediately repatriated and were only transiting the country.

The government said it could not cope with a large number of Arab or Asian workers fleeing Libya as it did during the anti-Kadhafi armed revolt of 2011.

WWI CENTENARY

Old foes unite for the fallen

AFP, Hartmannswiller

French President Francois Hollande and his German counterpart Joachim Gauck paid emotional tributes to the millions of soldiers who died during World War I, exactly 100 years after Germany declared hostilities against France.

The two leaders gathered at Hartmannswillerkopf where 30,000 soldiers lost their lives in fierce battles around the mountain peak known as the "man-eater" in France's Alsace region near the border between the two countries.

In a speech lauding as "an example for the world" the friendship between two countries that were once fierce enemies, Hollande remembered conflicts still raging around the world, including the confrontation between Israel and Hamas in Gaza that has claimed over 1,800 lives.

"France and Germany, beyond their suffering and bereavements, had the courage to make up -- it was the best way to honour the dead and provide a guarantee of peace to the living," he said.

Standing near the bucolic peak of Hartmannswillerkopf, Gauck reminded onlookers that the site "symbolises the absurdity and horror of those years".

The symbolism of the event was all the stronger as August 3, 1914 "opened a period of 30 years of conflicts, bitterness, massacres and barbarity between France and Germany," the French presidency said in a statement.

In Hartmannswillerkopf, Hollande and Gauck also signed a joint declaration on Franco-German friendship as the foundation stone for the first World War I museum jointly conceived by historians from both countries was laid on the ground.

They then stood in silence in front of a monument under which are buried the ashes of some 12,000 unknown French and German soldiers.

Other countries held events yesterday or were due this week to commemorate the 1914-1918 war, which left some 10 million dead and 20 million injured on the battlefields. Millions more perished under occupation through disease, hunger or deportation.



French President Francois Hollande (R) and his German counterpart Joachim Gauck lay the foundation stone of a museum during the ceremony in northeastern France, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP