

## KSA warns Israel on danger of ground ops

REUTERS, Cairo

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry released a statement yesterday condemning any ground operations by Israeli forces that may threaten the lives of Palestinian civilians.

"The Kingdom condemns and denounces the ground operations carried out by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip, and warns of the danger of continuing to carry out these blatant and unjustified violations of international law against our brotherly Palestinians," the statement said.

The Israeli military said it had entered northern Gaza overnight and expanded military operations in the Gaza Strip.

Earlier, the Saudi government strongly warned the US that the ground invasion by the Israeli army into the Gaza Strip could turn catastrophic for West Asia.

## Erdogan calls West 'main culprit' behind Gaza 'massacre'

AFP, Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday called Western powers "the main culprit" behind the Israeli army's "massacre" of Palestinians in Gaza.

"The main culprit behind the massacre unfolding in Gaza is the West," Erdogan told a rally of several hundred thousand Palestinian supporters in Istanbul.

Turkey has condemned Israeli civilian deaths caused by Hamas's October 7 rampage through southern Israel, but Erdogan this week called the militant group Palestinian "freedom fighters".

He also criticised some Western nations' unconditional support for Jerusalem, drawing sharp rebukes from Italy and Israel.

Unlike many Nato allies, the European Union and some Gulf states, Turkey does not consider Hamas a terrorist organisation.

Addressing the rally, Erdogan said that Israel was behaving like a "war criminal".

"Of course, every country has the right to defend itself. But where is the justice in this case?"

He accused Western powers of "shedding tears" over the death of civilians in Ukraine and turning a blind eye on the death of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.



People sift through the rubble of a building destroyed in Israeli strikes on Gaza City yesterday. *Inset*, a young Palestinian sit on plastic jerrycans at a water filling point, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, amid the ongoing battles between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas.

PHOTO: AFP

# Can't guarantee journos' safety in Gaza

Says Israeli military; White House says US not drawing red lines for Israel

REUTERS

Israel's military has told international news organisations Reuters and Agence France Presse that it cannot guarantee the safety of their journalists operating in the Gaza Strip, under Israeli bombardment and siege for almost three weeks.

The Israel Defense Forces wrote to Reuters and AFP this week after they had sought assurances that their journalists in Gaza would not be targeted by Israeli strikes.

"The IDF is targeting all Hamas military activity throughout Gaza," the IDF letter said, adding that Hamas deliberately put military operations "in the vicinity of journalists and civilians".

The IDF also noted that its high-intensity strikes on Hamas targets could cause damage to surrounding buildings and that Hamas rockets could also misfire and kill people inside Gaza.

"Under these circumstances, we cannot guarantee your employees' safety, and strongly urge you to take all necessary measures for their safety," the IDF letter concluded.

Hamas did not immediately comment when asked about the IDF's allegation that it put military operations near where journalists in Gaza are known to be based.

Reuters could not verify how many other news organizations operating in Gaza had received the same letter from the IDF. The IDF did not have any immediate comment.

Reuters and AFP said they were very concerned about the safety of journalists in Gaza.



"The situation on the ground is dire, and the IDF's unwillingness to give assurances about the safety of our staff threatens their ability to deliver the news about this conflict without fear of being injured or killed," Reuters said in a statement in response to receiving the Israel military letter.

AFP Global News Director Phil Chetwynd said his news organisation had received the same letter.

"We are in an incredibly precarious position and it's important that the world understands that there is a large team of journalists working in extremely dangerous conditions," Chetwynd said.

The Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 27 journalists have been killed since the war began, mostly in Gaza but also in Israel and southern Lebanon.

A Reuters video journalist was killed and six other journalists injured in southern Lebanon on October 13 when missiles fired

from the direction of Israel struck them, according to a Reuters videographer who was at the scene.

As of October 27, according to CPJ's latest update, 22 Palestinians, four Israelis and one Lebanese have been killed.

Meanwhile, the White House said on Friday the United States is not trying to dictate limits for Israel, as the Israelis expanded their military operation in Gaza against Hamas.

The fresh military onslaught by Israel comes as the United States scrambles to arrange a humanitarian pause for deliveries of fuel and relief aid to Gaza civilians.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby, at a news briefing, would not comment on the Israeli expanded ground operation. But he said Washington supported Israel's right to defend itself after Hamas militants killed 1,400 people in southern Israel on October 7. "We're not drawing red lines for Israel," he said.

## SKIRMISHES ON ISRAEL BORDER

Nearly 29,000 displaced in Lebanon: UN

AFP, Beirut

Nearly 29,000 people have been displaced in Lebanon amid deadly exchanges between Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters and Israeli army, a United Nations agency said Friday.

A total of 28,965 people have been displaced, mainly in the country's south, the International Organization for Migration said in an update, adding that the figure had risen by 37 percent since October 23.

Some have found refuge with family members elsewhere in the country, while those who can afford it have been able to rent apartments on a short-term basis.

But with Lebanon in the grips of an economic crisis that has plunged most of the population into poverty, some are living in makeshift shelters in the south's larger towns.

Israel's military said yesterday it had stopped a surface-to-air missile fired from Lebanon at one of its drones and the Lebanese authorities issued precautionary guidance in case it has to evacuate Beirut airport.

In Lebanon, at least 58 people have been killed in the cross-border exchanges of fire, most of them Hezbollah fighters but also including at least four civilians, one of them Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah.

## US, China agree to work towards Biden-Xi summit

AFP, Washington

The United States and China agreed Friday to work towards setting up a meeting between the two countries' leaders next month, after President Joe Biden met Beijing's top diplomat at the White House. Biden has invited Xi Jinping to San Francisco in November for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit at a time of tense relations between the two powers. Xi has not yet confirmed he will come. After Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Biden and other senior US officials in Washington, the White House said both countries had agreed to keep up "high-level diplomacy" to try to smooth ties. The two sides "reaffirmed" that they were "working together towards a meeting between President Biden and President Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November," the White House said in a statement. A senior administration official said the White House was leaving it to Beijing to confirm that Xi would come, but "we are making preparations for just such a meeting." An official readout of talks between Wang and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan released by Beijing confirmed "both sides agreed to make joint efforts to realize a meeting between the two heads of state". In a separate readout of his meeting with Biden, Wang was quoted as saying his visit was aimed at "working to stop the decline in China-US relations, stabilize them, and bring them back to the track of sound and steady development."

## KAZAKHSTAN MINE FIRE

32 people killed, dozen missing

AFP, Karaganda



Kazakhstan said yesterday that 32 people were killed in a fire in yet another deadly accident in a mine owned by ArcelorMittal, with over a dozen still missing, in the Central Asian country's worst disaster in years. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

called the Luxembourg-listed ArcelorMittal group the "worst" company "in our history" and ordered his government to take control of the Kazakh branch of the company. ArcelorMittal has a history of deadly disasters in Kazakhstan and is regularly accused of failing to respect safety and environmental regulations. The fire was one of the deadliest in Kazakhstan's post-Soviet history and came just two months after five miners were killed in a blast at a site owned by the company.

## Iran teen dies month after metro incident

AFP, Tehran

An Iranian high school student died yesterday, nearly a month after falling into a coma in disputed circumstances on the Tehran metro, media in the Islamic republic said. "Armita Garawand, a student in Tehran, died an hour ago after intensive medical treatment and 28 days of hospitalisation in intensive care," reported the Borna news agency affiliated with the youth ministry. The 17-year-old ethnic Kurd, who was declared "brain dead" a week ago, had been hospitalised at Fajr Hospital in Tehran since October 1 after she fell unconscious on the metro. The circumstances of the incident have been disputed, with metro surveillance footage showing the unveiled teenager being evacuated after fainting in a carriage.

## Suspect in US mass shooting found dead

AFP, Lewiston

The suspect in a mass shooting that killed 18 people in the US state of Maine has been found dead, the state's governor said Friday, ending a two-day manhunt that mobilized hundreds of law enforcement agents and set jittery residents of the northeastern state on edge.

Robert Card, a 40-year-old Army reservist, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, and his body was discovered at 7:45 pm (2345 GMT), Maine public safety commissioner Mike Sauschuck said.

Card is believed to be the perpetrator of a rampage on Wednesday evening that left 18 people dead and 13 others wounded in a bowling alley and a bar-restaurant in this city.

## HURRICANE OTIS DEVASTATION Mexican city of Acapulco ravaged by looting

REUTERS, Acapulco

Looting ravaged the Mexican city of Acapulco after the iconic beach resort was hammered this week by Hurricane Otis, a record-breaking storm that killed at least 27 people and left thousands of residents struggling to get food and water.

Otis pounded Acapulco with winds of 165 miles per hour (266 km per hour) early on Wednesday, flooding the city, tearing roofs from homes, stores and hotels, submerging vehicles, and severing communications as well as road and air connections.

The cost of devastation left by the Category 5 storm was estimated at billions of dollars, and over 8,000 armed forces members were sent to help the stricken port recover.

"Right now, money's no use to us because there's nothing to buy, everything's been looted," 57-year-old Acapulco resident Rodolfo Villagomez said after Otis tore through the city. "It was total chaos. You could hear it here hissing like a bull."

On Thursday evening, people carried off goods including food, water and toilet paper from stores. "We came to get food, because we don't have any," a woman told Reuters.

Reuters video showed people carrying boxes from a wrecked supermarket and loading up cars. Inside, shelves were bare.

"There were acts of looting in some places because there was an emergency," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday, urging residents not to take advantage of the situation.

Elsewhere, household detritus was littered among ruined deck chairs and jumbles of mangled trees outside wrecked homes.

Speaking at a regular press conference, Lopez Obrador said the government would help people in the city of nearly 900,000 in the southern state of Guerrero, one of Mexico's poorest.

But many residents said the aid was insufficient.



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