

Tensions flare at several US univs over Gaza protests

In-person classes cancelled, demonstrators arrested

AFP, New York

Tensions flared between pro-Palestinian student protesters and school administrators at several US universities Monday, as in-person classes were cancelled and demonstrators arrested.

The protests, which began last week at Columbia University with a large group of demonstrators establishing a so-called "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on school grounds, have spread to other campuses, including Yale, MIT and others.

Some Jewish students at Columbia have reported intimidation and anti-Semitism amid the days-long protest, which is calling for the prestigious New York institution to divest from companies with ties to Israel.

Classes were moved online Monday, with university president Nemat Shafik calling for a "reset" in an open letter to the school community.

"Over the past days, there have been too many examples of intimidating and harassing behavior on our campus," she said. "Anti-Semitic language, like any other language that is used to hurt and frighten people, is unacceptable and appropriate action will be taken."

"To deescalate the rancor and give us all a chance to consider next steps, I am announcing that all classes will be held virtually on Monday," she added. Last week, over 100 protesters were arrested after university authorities called the police onto the private campus.



Displaced Palestinians, who fled their homes due to Israeli strikes, shelter in a UNRWA-affiliated school in Deir Al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip yesterday. Israeli strikes intensified across Gaza in some of the heaviest shelling in weeks, residents said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Troops back in border trade hub

Says Myanmar junta

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar junta troops have moved back into a vital border town they were ousted from by an alliance of ethnic rebels and anti-junta fighters this month, military sources told AFP yesterday.

The Karen National Union (KNU) and "People's Defence Force" fighters ousted around 200 military soldiers from their positions in the lucrative trade hub of Myawaddy around April 10, in a major blow to the junta.

The troops withdrew to a bridge that connects Myawaddy to Thailand's Mae Sot town following the clashes, which sent thousands fleeing Myanmar.

Yesterday, "some of our troops arrived at the 275 military command," junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun told AFP, referring to the previously vacated military base in Myawaddy.

Hezbollah launches deepest strike into Israel

REUTERS, Dubai

Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah group said yesterday it had launched a drone attack against Israeli military bases north of the city of Acre, in its deepest strike into Israeli territory since the Gaza offensive began.

The Israeli military said it had no knowledge of any of its facilities being hit by Hezbollah, but had said earlier yesterday that it intercepted two "aerial targets" off Israel's coast.

Hezbollah said it acted in retaliation for an earlier Israeli attack killing one of its fighters.

The group published what appeared to be a satellite photo, with the location of the strike symbolised by a flash with a red circle around it that sat halfway between Acre and Nahariyya to the north.

Israeli airstrikes killed two Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon, the military said earlier yesterday. Hezbollah later confirmed the death of one of its fighters, Hussein Azkoul, but provided no further details.

A separate Israeli strike overnight Monday to yesterday killed a fighter in Hezbollah's elite unit, Radwan Forces, the military said, though Hezbollah has not confirmed his death.

Since October, Israeli strikes have killed about 270 Hezbollah fighters as well as about 50 civilians.

'Neutrality' issues found at UNRWA, review finds

Israel yet to provide evidence for incendiary allegations that UN agency's staff were members of terrorist organizations

AFP, United Nations

An independent review group on the UN agency for Palestinians found some "neutrality-related issues," its much-anticipated report said Monday, but noted Israel had yet to provide evidence for incendiary allegations that staff were members of terrorist organizations.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) remains "irreplaceable and indispensable to Palestinians' human and economic development" added the 54-page report, which was led by French diplomat Catherine Colonna.

The review also found that the majority of neutrality breaches related to the social media posts.

The review group was created following allegations made by Israel in January that some UNRWA staff may have participated in the October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks. In the weeks that followed, numerous donor states suspended or paused some \$450 million in funding.

Many have since resumed funding, including Sweden, Canada, Japan, the EU and France -- while others, including the United States and Britain -- have not.

Congress passed a bill signed into law by President Joe Biden



last month that blocks US funding until March 2025.

The freezes to the main aid agency in Gaza come as months of Israeli military operations have turned the territory into a "humanitarian hellcape," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said recently, with its 2.3 million people in desperate need of food, water, shelter and medicine.

Colonna's team was tasked with assessing whether UNRWA was "doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality," while Guterres activated a second investigation to probe Israel's allegations.

Despite a framework for ensuring it upheld the humanitarian principle of neutrality, the review found that "neutrality-related issues persist," including staff sharing biased political posts on social media and the use of a small number

of textbooks with "problematic content" in some UNRWA schools.

But it added "Israel has yet to provide supporting evidence" for its claim that UNRWA employs more than 400 "terrorists."

Israel responded by saying that "the Colonna report ignores the severity of the problem, and offers cosmetic solutions that do not deal with the enormous scope of Hamas' infiltration of UNRWA."

UNRWA itself welcomed the findings and Guterres said he accepted its recommendations.

The review found that the majority of neutrality breaches related to social media posts, often following incidents of violence affecting colleagues or relatives.

"One preventive action could be to ensure that personnel are given space to discuss these traumatic incidents," said the report, which was co-authored with three Nordic rights groups.

Maldives vows China-backed building boom, Indians OUT

AFP, Male

The Maldives will press on with Chinese-backed construction and evict Indian troops from the strategically placed atoll nation, President Mohamed Muizzu's office said yesterday, two days after his party's stunning parliamentary victory.

He thanked voters for the landslide victory by his People's National Congress, which promised a boom in building apartments, bridges and new airports with Chinese funding.

Muizzu, 45, won September presidential polls after vowing to evict 89 Indian troops deployed in the country.

The Indian contingent -- operating three aircraft patrolling the archipelago's vast maritime boundary -- is due to leave by May 10.

Muizzu consolidated his hold on power by winning more than two-thirds of the seats in Sunday's vote for the 93-member assembly.

"We will bid farewell to the enduring anguish of housing insecurity, a pressing and longstanding concern burdening the Maldivian populace," his office said, quoting his promise at a victory rally in Male on Monday.

He did not mention China or India by name, but said he will work towards ensuring that the Maldives' sovereignty is not compromised.

US rights report on India finds abuses in Manipur Cites harassment of media

REUTERS, Washington

The US State Department's annual human rights assessment found "significant" abuses in India's northeastern Manipur state last year and attacks on minorities, journalists and dissenting voices in the rest of the country. Manipur has seen fierce fighting between its Kuki-Zo and majority Meitei populations after a court order a year ago suggested the Kuki's minority privileges be extended to the Meitei. The report said over 60,000 people were displaced between May and November in Manipur. There was no immediate comment on the report from Indian embassy in Washington. In the rest of India, the State Department reported "numerous instances" in which the government and its allies "allegedly pressured or harassed media outlets critical of the government."

'My 90-sec speech created panic in INDIA bloc'

Modi tells election rally

NDTV ONLINE

Amid a debate on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks that "Congress wants to snatch women's Mangalsutra," the Prime Minister reiterated yesterday that he had put the truth before the country that Congress is hatching a deep conspiracy to snatch your property and distribute it to its special people. Addressing a public meeting in Rajasthan yesterday, Modi said that his speech had created panic in the entire Congress and INDIA bloc. "When I came to Rajasthan the day before yesterday, I had presented some truths before the country in my 90-second speech. This has created panic in the entire Congress and INDIA alliance... After all, why is Congress so afraid of the truth?" the Prime Minister said.

THE HIMALAYAN CLIMATE CHANGE

89pc of 2,431 glacial lakes expanded in 38 years: ISRO

NDTV ONLINE

At least 89 percent of 2,431 glacial lakes in the Himalayas that were identified in 2016-17 have notably expanded since 1984, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said in a report on Monday.

The results of the ISRO analysis is worrying as expanding glacial lakes due to warming can lead to cascading consequences in the lower regions, say experts. Satellite data archives spanning the past three to four decades provide valuable insights into changes occurring in glaciated environments, ISRO said.

Long term satellite imagery covering the catchments of Indian Himalayan river basins from 1984 to 2023 indicates significant changes in glacial lakes, ISRO said in the report.



The ISRO report said 601 glacial lakes, or 89 percent, have expanded more than twice, and 10 lakes have grown between 1.5 times and double their size. Sixty-five lakes have expanded 1.5 times.

Of the 2,431 glacial lakes larger than 10 hectares, 676 have significantly expanded, and at least 130 of these lakes are in India -- 65 (Indus river basin), 7 (Ganga river basin), and 58 (Brahmaputra river basin).



SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY

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Sd/
Acting Registrar