

Israel to shut down Al Jazeera's local operations

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that his government has decided to shut down the Qatar-based news channel Al Jazeera, with which his administration has had a long-running feud.

The government "unanimously decided" the incitement channel Al Jazeera will be closed in Israel", Netanyahu said on X, formerly Twitter.

"There will be no freedom of speech for the Hamas trumpets in Israel," Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi said in a separate joint statement with Netanyahu.

Walid Al-Omari, head of Al Jazeera's offices in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, reacted to the decision by saying it followed "a campaign in search of easy victories by ministers on (Israel's) extreme right".



Palestinians strive to salvage usable belongings from the site of an Israeli strike on a house in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Rebuilding Gaza's shattered homes will take at least until 2040 but could drag on for many decades, according to a UN report. PHOTO: REUTERS

BORDER VILLAGE

Four Lebanese killed in Israeli airstrike

Hezbollah launches retaliatory strikes

REUTERS, Amman

An Israeli airstrike killed four members of a family in a house in a border village in southern Lebanon yesterday, civil



defence and security sources said.

The four were killed in Meiss al Jabal, which has suffered extensive damage in regular exchanges of fire between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group since the start of offensive in Gaza last October.

In a statement, Hezbollah said it fired "tens" of Katyusha rockets at the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, a northern town close to the Lebanese border, in retaliation.

Airstrikes and shelling have taken place sporadically but both sides have pulled back from all out war. More than 250 Hezbollah members and 75 civilians have been killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon since October, security sources there say. In Israel, missile fire coming from Lebanon has killed around a dozen troops and several civilians, Israeli sources say.

Both the US and France have made diplomatic efforts to calm tensions on the Lebanese-Israeli border.

The UN children's agency warned Tuesday that conflict on Lebanon's border was taking a heavy toll on children, with thousands out of school and healthcare "critically impacted".

"We are deeply alarmed by the situation of children and families who have been forced from their homes," Edouard Beigbeder, the Lebanon representative for Unicef, said in a statement.

'Full-blown famine' happening in north Gaza

Warns WFP chief; aid agencies blame trickle of essential food into the enclave on restrictions imposed by Israel

AFP, Washington

The chief of the United Nations' food program has warned of a "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza and reiterated calls for a ceasefire in Israel's offensive in the Palestinian enclave.

"There is famine, full-blown famine in the north and it's moving its way south," Cindy McCain, executive director of the World Food Program (WFP), said in an interview excerpt published on Saturday.

"What we are asking for and what we've continually asked for is a ceasefire and the ability to have unfettered access to get in safe... into Gaza -- various ports, various gate crossings," McCain continued.

The World Food Program is one of the many humanitarian groups trying to get aid into Gaza.

The World Health Organization said Friday that the availability of food in the Gaza Strip has very slightly improved, though the risk of famine continues in the besieged Palestinian territory, which is home to 2.4 million people.

Israel has repeatedly accused the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations of not distributing aid quickly enough.



The aid agencies blame the trickle of essential food into the Palestinian enclave on restrictions and inspections imposed by Israel.

Meanwhile, British-Palestinian doctor and Glasgow University rector Ghassan Abu-Sittah was on Saturday denied access to France where he had been due address a meeting on the medical situation in Gaza.

Abu-Sittah said on X, formerly Twitter, that he had been invited to address French senators about his experience

as a doctor in Gaza since the Israeli offensive there but had been blocked at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport.

"They say the Germans put a 1 year ban on my entry to Europe," he wrote.

A French police source confirmed to AFP that France could not admit the doctor because it was bound by a German-issued ban on his entry into the visa-free Schengen zone of which both countries are members.

Abu-Sittah had already been stopped from entering Germany last month.

ALLEGED MCC VIOLATION

India's Congress files complaint with EC against BJP chief, others

TNN, Bengaluru

India's Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) yesterday sought the Election Commission (EC) to initiate action against BJP's president J P Nadda and other senior leaders for allegedly violating the model code of conduct (MCC) by posting a video on social media intimidating members of SC and ST community not to vote for a particular candidate. In a complaint to the Karnataka Chief Electoral Officer, the Congress mentioned about a video uploaded on 'X' by the official account of Karnataka State Bharatiya Janata Party (@bjp4karnataka which is operated by Amit Malviya, the head of IT cell, on instructions of J P Nadda, BJP National President, B Y Vijayendra, BJP State President and Social Media in-charge- Karnataka BJP on Saturday at 5:34 pm. "The said video posted on social media featured animated characters of Rahul Gandhi and Siddaramaiah. In the clip, SC, ST and OBC community are portrayed as "eggs" in a nest and it also suggested Rahul Gandhi planting a big egg labelled as Muslim community. It is projected as though funds are being fed to the chick depicting the Muslim community, which then kicks out SC, ST and OBC community," according to the complaint.

SIKH LEADER MURDER

Canada PM hails 'rule of law' after three arrests

Acknowledges fear in Sikh community

AFP, Montreal

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Saturday acknowledged fear in Canada's Sikh community but underscored the "rule of law" after three arrests in connection with last year's killing of a Sikh leader in Vancouver. Police arrested three men on Friday for the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, which triggered a diplomatic rift between Canada and India last fall after Trudeau suggested Indian government involvement in the homicide. Speaking Saturday at a gala in Toronto to celebrate Sikh heritage and culture, Trudeau acknowledged that many in Canada's Sikh community are "feeling uneasy, and perhaps even frightened right now," but urged faith in the justice system. "Let us remain calm and us remain steadfast in our commitment to our democratic principles and our system of justice," he said. Trudeau said the arrests were "important because Canada is a rule of law country with a strong and independent justice system, as well as a fundamental commitment to protecting all its citizens." Three Indian nationals, two aged 22 and one aged 28, were arrested Friday on first-degree murder and conspiracy charges. They are accused of being the shooter, driver and lookout on the day Nijjar was killed. Police said they were still investigating the ties of the suspects.



Let's pray for each other. When we all came closer to each other, we were no longer strangers to each other...And we believe: God has a chevron with the Ukrainian flag on his shoulder. So with such an ally, life will definitely win over death.

On Orthodox Easter, Zelensky calls on Ukrainians to unite in prayer

China's Xi arrives in France for state visit

AFP, Paris

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday arrived in France on a state visit hosted by Emmanuel Macron where the French leader will seek to push his counterpart on issues ranging from Ukraine to trade.

Xi's arrival for the visit marking 60 years of diplomatic relations between France and China was the start of his first trip to Europe since 2019 which will also see him visit Serbia and Hungary.

But Xi's choice of France as the sole major European power to visit indicates the relative warmth in Sino-French relations since Macron made his own state visit to China in April 2023 and acknowledges the French leader's stature as an EU powerbroker.

Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said the plane carrying Xi had touched down in Paris.

The leader of the one-party Communist state of more than 1.4 billion people, accompanied by his wife Peng Liyuan, was to be welcomed at Paris Orly airport by Prime Minister Gabriel Attal.

Xi is to hold a day of talks in Paris today -- also including EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen -- followed by a state banquet hosted by Macron.

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