

Arab League calls for UN peacekeepers in Palestinian territories

AFP, Manama

The Arab League on Thursday called for a UN peacekeeping force in the Palestinian territories and an international peace conference at a summit dominated by the Israeli offensive in Gaza.

In a concluding statement following a meeting in Manama, the 22-member grouping called for "international protection and peacekeeping forces of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territories" until a two-state solution is implemented.

It also adopted calls by host Bahrain's King Hamad and Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas to "convene an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations, to resolve Palestinian issue on basis of the two-state solution".



Palestinians react to flyers dropped by the Israeli military over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday, amid ongoing battles between Israel and Hamas. Humanitarian workers already face a slew of challenges getting aid to civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip, and fear that as the Israelis offensive in the enclave rages on they may be forced to halt operations.

PHOTO: AFP

Israeli strikes on Lebanon kill three

Says source close to Hezbollah

AFP, Beirut

Israeli air strikes yesterday hit an area of southern Lebanon far from the border, with Hezbollah announcing one dead fighter and official media saying two Syrian children were killed.

Hezbollah, a Hamas ally, has traded cross-border fire with Israeli forces almost daily since the Israeli offensive in Gaza began on October 7.

The Iran-backed Lebanese movement has intensified its attacks in recent days, including using new weapons.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said "Israeli strikes targeted Najariyeh and Addousiyeh", two adjacent villages just south of the coastal city of Sidon, about 30 kilometres (19 miles) from the Israeli border.

The Israeli military said in a statement that its air force "struck terrorist infrastructure" where Hezbollah fighters operated in the Najariyeh area.

The "infrastructure contained several compounds used by Hezbollah's aerial defence array and posed a threat to Israeli aircraft", it added.

Hezbollah announced a fighter from Najariyeh had died.

'Our supply won't last'

Warns doctor at Gaza trauma centre; Hamas says over 100 academics killed in Israeli offensive

AFP, Jerusalem

At a field hospital that has become one of Gaza's main trauma centres, a doctor who has worked in a dozen war zones described the situation as the most "catastrophic" he had ever seen.

"It is devastating," said Javed Ali, International Medical Corps's head of emergency response in Gaza. Speaking to AFP this week from a field hospital northwest of the areas of Rafah ordered evacuated by Israel, he said the situation around the far-southern city was "dire".

Those arriving were "exhausted, they are scared, they don't have resources".

The hospital, in the coastal area of Al-Mawasi which Israel has designated a "humanitarian zone", has swelled in a matter of months into a more than 150-bed facility made up of numerous white tents and shipping containers.

Since the first evacuation orders for Rafah were issued on May 6, ahead of a long-feared ground invasion of the southernmost part of Gaza, nearly half of the 1.4 million people who had been sheltering there have left, according to UN agencies.

"There has been a massive movement of population," Ali said, adding that most had avoided Al-Mawasi, which was



already dramatically overcrowded, heading instead for the war-scarred city of Khan Yunis, which was a battleground until just last month.

Those arriving were "exhausted, they are scared, they don't have resources", Ali said, adding that many patients were asking for "money, support ... so they can move their families to safety".

"It's getting totally out of hand," he said. "Our supplies will not last."

Meanwhile, Gaza authorities released a list on Thursday of more than 100 academics and researchers they say have been killed by Israeli forces since offensive began over seven months ago.

"We strongly condemn the occupation's assassination of scientists, academics, university professors and researchers, who are a distinguished group in the Palestinian society in the Gaza Strip," the Hamas government's media office said in a statement.

"This sends a clear message that

they aim to completely eliminate scientists and researchers in the educational sector," it added.

Among those on the list of 104 names is Sufyan Tayeh, who was the president of the Islamic University and a leading researcher in physics and applied mathematics. Top surgeon and professor of medicine Adnan al-Barsh was also listed.

According to the Palestinian Prisoners Club, Barsh, 50, died in Israeli custody on April 19 after being detained with other doctors at Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza last December.

Asked at the time about his reported death in custody, the Israeli army said it was "currently not aware of such (an) incident."

The Hamas government called on the "free countries of the world and higher education worldwide to condemn this historical crime and to pressure the occupation to stop the genocidal war."

PRO-GAZA PROTEST

Belgium's Ghent univ severs ties with 3 Israeli institutions

REUTERS, Brussels

Belgium's University of Ghent (UGent) is severing ties with three Israeli educational or research institutions which it says no longer align with UGent's human rights policy, its rector said.

Pro-Palestinian protesters in Ghent have been protesting against Israel's military offensive in Gaza and have been occupying parts of the university since early this month.

The university's rector, Rik Van de Walle, said that ties were being cut with Holon Institute of Technology, MIGAL Galilee Research Institute, and the Volcani Center.

"We currently assess these three partners as (very) problematic according to the Ghent University human rights test, in contrast to the positive evaluation we gave these partners at the start of our collaboration," Van de Walle said.

Partnerships with MIGAL Galilee Research Institute and the Volcani Centre "were no longer desirable" due to their affiliation with Israeli ministries, an investigation by the university found.

DELHI LIQUOR POLICY CASE

AAP named as accused by India probe agency

NDTV ONLINE

Opening a new chapter in India's jurisprudence, the Enforcement Directorate, for the first time, yesterday named a political party as an accused in a case.

In a supplementary charge sheet filed in the Rouse Avenue court in the alleged liquor policy scam, the Enforcement Directorate has named the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) - a national political party - and its national convener, Arvind Kejriwal, who is out on interim bail in the case.

The agency is probing the money laundering angle of the alleged scam and this is the eighth charge-sheet it has filed in the case, but the first in which the Delhi chief minister has been named.

Kejriwal was arrested on March 21, becoming the third senior AAP leader to be taken into custody in the alleged scam, after his former deputy Manish Sisodia and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh.

Sources said the decision to name the AAP as an accused can have major repercussions for the party.

The Enforcement Directorate, they said, now has the option of writing to the Election Commission of India and requesting them to begin the process of derecognising the Aam Aadmi Party.

It can also attach the party's assets, including its headquarters in Delhi.

Congress aiming to win 50 seats to save its honour

Modi tells polls rally in UP

THE ECONOMIC TIMES ONLINE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday took a jibe at the Congress saying its aim is to win just 50 seats so that it could save its "honour", and he also mocked Rahul Gandhi for contesting the Lok Sabha polls from Rae Bareilly instead of Amethi which he lost to the BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019.

Addressing an election rally in Fatehpur of Uttar Pradesh, the prime minister also claimed that INIDA bloc has been defeated in the first four phases of elections itself and its "disappointed" workers have now stopped leaving their homes for polls-related activities.

Modi said he had predicted that Rahul Gandhi would not dare to contest from Amethi and this has turned out to be true.

"The further news is that to save its honour, the Congress has now launched Mission 50. The target of the Congress is to get 50 seats in the entire country by any means," he said.

Taking a swipe at the SP and the Congress, Modi said, "The dreams of 'panja' (Congress's poll symbol) and 'cycle' (SP's poll symbol) have shattered 'khata-khat, khata-khat'. Now they are planning for post-June 4 as to who should be blamed for the defeat 'khata-khat, khata-khat'. And, someone was telling me that tickets for foreign trips have also been booked 'khata-khat, khata-khat'."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has used the phrase "Khata-khat khata-khat" to claim that a fixed stipend would flow into the accounts of poor women if his party comes to power.



GUNFIRE NEAR EMBASSY

Sweden boosts security for Israeli interests

REUTERS, Stockholm

Swedish police have cordoned off an area in Stockholm after a patrol heard suspected gunshots, they said yesterday, with the Israeli embassy located in the closed-off area.

Police declined to comment on whether there was a link between the incident and the Israeli embassy, Swedish news agency TT reported.

"A police patrol at Strandvagen in Stockholm heard bangs and suspected there had been a shooting," police said on their website shortly after midnight, adding that the affected area lay between the capital's Djurgarden Bridge, its Nobel Park and the Oscar Church.

"In connection with the ongoing forensic investigation, findings have been made that strengthen the suspicions that a shooting took place," they said.

Police said an investigation into suspected serious weapons crime had been launched and that they held several people in connection with the incident.

A prosecutor's office spokesperson later in the day said none of them remained in custody.

The Israeli embassy could not immediately be reached for comment.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces battled Hamas fighters in the narrow alleyways of Jabalia in northern Gaza yesterday in some of the fiercest engagements since they returned to the area a week ago, while in the south Hamas attacked tanks massing around Rafah.



Migrants from Jordan, China, Egypt and Colombia surrender to a border patrol agent after crossing into the US from Mexico in Jacumba Hot Springs, California, US. The photo was taken on Thursday and released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran arrests 250 in raid on 'satanist network'

AFP, Tehran

Iranian police announced yesterday that they arrested more than 250 people including three foreigners over promoting "satanism" west of capital Tehran, state media reported.

"The Police Information Center announced the identification, dismantling, and widespread arrest of members of the satanist network," IRNA state news agency reported, citing a police statement.

Police arrested "146 men and 115 women" who "were in an undesirable and obscene condition with emblems, signs, and symbols of satanism on their clothes, head, face, and hair," the statement said.

"Three European citizens" were also arrested during the police operation in Shahrivar city, west of Tehran on Thursday night. Raids on "satanist" gatherings are not uncommon in Iran.