



DEADLY ISRAELI STRIKE  
ON GAZA SCHOOL



(From left, clockwise) Displaced Palestinians watch as first responders prepare to transport the corpses of people killed in an Israeli strike on a school in Gaza City yesterday that killed more than 90 people; a young girl cries inside the school after the attack; an injured man comforts his daughter after several members of his family were killed in an overnight Israeli strike.

PHOTO: AFP



## POLITICAL TRANSITION IN VENEZUELA Maduro rejects Panama’s offer

REUTERS, Panama City

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro gave a scathing response to an offer on Friday from his Panamanian counterpart, Jose Raul Mulino, to facilitate his departure to a third country to allow for a political transition.

Mulino told broadcaster CNN he would give Maduro safe passage to act as a “bridge” to a third country, in the aftermath of a July 28 election Maduro says he won but independent pollsters claim as an opposition landslide.

“If that’s the contribution, the sacrifice that Panama has to make, by offering our soil so that this man and his family can leave Venezuela, Panama would do it without a doubt,” Mulino said in an interview.

But Maduro accused the Panamanian president, who himself was elected to office just three months ago, of getting “carried away by the gringos,” using a derogatory term for Americans.

“I will try to learn your name, President of Panama, but whoever messes with Venezuela runs aground,” Maduro told reporters outside a courtroom where he filed an appeal to verify the electoral results.

Maduro has claimed a 51% victory in last month’s election, while the political opposition maintains its candidate won by millions of votes. Venezuela’s electoral authority has yet to release detailed vote tallies.



## Iran to ‘harshly punish’ Israel Says guards deputy chief

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran is set to carry out an order by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to “harshly punish” Israel over the assassination of a Hamas leader in Tehran, a Revolutionary Guards deputy commander was quoted as saying on Friday by local news agencies.

“The supreme leader’s orders regarding the harsh punishment of Israel and revenge for the blood of martyr Ismail Haniyeh are clear and explicit ... and they will be implemented in the best possible way,” said Ali Fadavi, cited by Iranian media.

Iran and Palestinian Islamist group Hamas accuse Israel of carrying out Haniyeh’s assassination on July 31. Israel has not claimed or denied responsibility for the killing, which has fueled further concern that the war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip was turning into a wider Middle East war.

Asked by reporters to respond to Fadavi’s remarks, White House national security spokesperson John Kirby said the US was ready to defend Israel with plenty of resources in the region, adding: “When we hear rhetoric like that we’ve got to take it seriously, and we do.”

Iran’s mission to the United Nations said later on Friday that “Iran’s response to Israel’s assassination of Haniyeh was “a matter totally unrelated” to efforts to broker a ceasefire in the 10-month war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

“However, we hope that our response will be timed and conducted in a manner not to the detriment of the potential ceasefire,” the mission said when asked if Iran could delay its retaliation until after Gaza ceasefire talks next week.

## Escalations in Middle East serve no one

US tells Israel, releases \$35b to Israel to spend on weapons

REUTERS, Washington

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in a phone call on Friday that the escalation of tensions in the Middle East was “in no party’s interest” while also stressing the need for a Gaza ceasefire, the State Department said.

There has been an increased risk of escalation into a broader Middle East war after recent killings of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas’ leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran and of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut drew threats of retaliation against Israel.

As a result, many fear a widening of Israel’s war in Gaza that has already killed tens of thousands and caused a humanitarian crisis.

“The Secretary reaffirmed the United States’ ironclad commitment to Israel’s security and discussed how escalation is in no party’s interest,” the State Department said in a statement.

Blinken stressed the “urgent need to reach a ceasefire in Gaza”

that could release hostages held in the enclave and “create the conditions for broader regional stability,” the State Department added.

Meanwhile, Washington will provide Israel \$3.5 billion to spend on US weapons and military equipment, the State Department said on Friday, with the release of the money coming months after the US Congress appropriated it during Israel’s war in Gaza.

A State Department spokesperson said on Friday that the department notified Congress on Thursday that the government intended to release the billions of dollars worth of foreign military financing to Israel.

CNN reported earlier on the release of this amount which comes from a \$14 billion supplemental funding bill for Israel passed by the Congress in April.

Meanwhile, an Israeli airstrike on a Gaza school compound housing displaced families killed around 100 people, the Hamas-run Gaza government said on Saturday, while the Israeli military said it had

targeted Hamas militants and cast doubt on the Palestinian death toll.

Video from the site showed body parts scattered on the ground and more bodies being carried away and covered in blankets on the floor. Empty food tins lay in a puddle of blood and burnt mattresses and a child’s doll lay among the debris.

In another video, men prayed over a dozen body bags laid out on the ground. It was not immediately clear whether all the videos were filmed on the ground floor of the Tabeen school complex, in Gaza City.

Gaza’s Hamas-run media office said in a statement that the complex was attacked when people sheltering there were performing dawn prayers.

The Gaza health ministry says that since October 7, Israel’s military assault on the Hamas governed enclave has killed nearly 40,000 Palestinians while also displacing nearly the entire population of 2.3 million, causing a hunger crisis and leading to genocide accusations that Israel denies.

### MAJOR UKRAINIAN INCURSION

## Intense battles rage inside Russia

Moscow imposes security regime on border regions; Belarus destroys ‘drones from Ukraine’

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia was fighting intense battles yesterday against thousands of Ukrainian troops as deep as 20 km (12 miles) inside the Kursk region after Ukraine’s biggest attack on Russian sovereign territory since the start of the war in 2022.

Ukrainian forces rammed through the Russian border early on Tuesday and swept across some Western parts of Russia’s Kursk region, a surprise attack that may be aimed at gaining leverage in possible ceasefire talks after the US election.

Supported by swarms of drones and heavy artillery fire, Ukrainian units moved quickly to carve out a sliver of the Western Russian territory beside the border while sabotage units pierced deeper inside Russia, according to Russian war bloggers.

“The armed forces continue to repel the attempted invasion by the Ukrainian armed forces,” Russia’s defence ministry said yesterday, adding that intense battles were focused around Malaya Loknya, Olgovka and Ivashkovskoye, settlements around 10-20 km inside Russia.

In a sign of the gravity of the situation, Russia imposed a sweeping security regime in three border regions yesterday while Belarus said it had repelled what it



thinks was a major drone attack from Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin cast the Ukrainian attack as a major provocation and though Russia’s top general, Valery Gerasimov, said on Wednesday that Ukraine’s incursion had been halted, Russia has thus far failed to push the Ukrainian forces back over the border.

Russian military bloggers said yesterday the situation had stabilised after Russia rushed in forces to halt the surprise advance, though they said Ukraine was

swiftly building up forces.

The Ukrainian attack has prompted some in Moscow to question why Ukraine was able to pierce the Kursk region so easily after more than two years of the most intense land war in Europe since World War Two.

“A full scale military operation is underway against a very serious enemy who are certainly not idiots,” said Yuri Podolyaka, a popular Ukrainian-born, pro-Russian military blogger. He said that Russian aviation had saved the day by

## India, Maldives look to reset ties after spat

AFP, Male

India’s foreign minister has called the Maldives a “priority” for New Delhi on his first trip to the archipelago nation since its pro-China president expelled Indian troops.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said late Friday he was in the Maldives to “take stock of our defence and security engagement”, months after President Mohamed Muizzu’s administration signed a military assistance pact with Beijing.

Known as a luxury holiday destination with pristine white sand beaches and secluded resorts, the atoll nation has also become a geopolitical hotspot.

India is suspicious of China’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean, and Male’s military deal with Beijing came as Muizzu ordered a garrison of Indian soldiers stationed in the Maldives to assist with maritime patrols to leave.

Jaishankar, who will also meet Muizzu, said he wanted to highlight India’s “continued support to Maldives in its quest for progress and prosperity”.

Global east-west shipping lanes pass the nation’s chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands, stretching around 800 kilometres (500 miles) across the equator.

India’s government has traditionally considered the Maldives, home to around half a million people, within its sphere of influence.

“For India, neighbourhood is a priority and, in the neighbourhood, Maldives is a priority”, Jaishankar said in a speech Friday.

Male’s foreign minister Moosa Zameer called India “one of our closest friends”, in a statement.

Zameer said the two countries had agreed to strengthen economic ties, saying Muizzu had asked to “begin negotiations” on a free trade agreement with New Delhi.

Defence links were also discussed, including “continuing joint exercises and expanding training opportunities for officers”, he added.

In June, Muizzu visited New Delhi for Narendra Modi’s inauguration as prime minister.

Muizzu’s election successes hinged on a sustained campaign against India’s outsized political and economic clout in the Maldives.

Its influence has been a periodic source of resentment in the Muslim-majority nation.

## US POLLS CAMPAIGN Harris in Arizona, Trump in Montana



REUTERS, Glendale

US Vice President Kamala Harris campaigned in a packed arena in Arizona on Friday, hoping to put Republican candidate Donald Trump on the back foot in the West, while Trump held his own rally in Montana to support a Republican candidate for Senate.

The Democratic presidential candidate, less than a month into her bid for the White House, has been on a week-long tour after naming her running mate, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, with a focus on building excitement for her campaign in seven states that could tip the Nov 5 election.

That tour on Friday brought her to the Phoenix area, where she was visiting with volunteers at a campaign office and speaking to voters.

Also in the West, Trump held a rally in Bozeman, Montana, a state that Republicans have carried in every presidential race since 1996.