

Israel squeezes Jenin camp in West Bank Palestinians fear Gaza-style clearance

REUTERS, JENIN

Israeli bulldozers have demolished large areas of the now virtually empty Jenin refugee camp and appear to be carving wide roadways through its once crowded warren of alleyways, echoing tactics already employed in Gaza as troops prepare for a long-term stay.

At least 40,000 Palestinians have left their homes in Jenin and the nearby city of Tulkarm in the northern West Bank since Israel began its operation just a day after reaching a ceasefire agreement in Gaza after 15 months of offensive.

"Jenin is a repeat of what happened in Jabalia," said Basheer Matahen, spokesperson for the Jenin municipality, referring to the refugee camp in northern Gaza that was cleared out by the Israeli army after weeks of bitter fighting. "The camp has become uninhabitable."

He said at least 12 bulldozers were at work demolishing houses and infrastructure in the camp, once a crowded township that housed descendants of Palestinians who fled their homes or were driven out in the 1948 war in what Palestinians call the 'Nakba' or catastrophe at the start of the state of Israel.

He said army engineering teams could be seen making preparations for a long-term stay, bringing water tanks and generators to a special area of almost one acre in size.

No comment was immediately available from the Israeli military but on Sunday, Defence Minister Israel Katz ordered troops to prepare for "a prolonged stay", saying the camps had been cleared "for the coming year" and residents would not be allowed to return.

The month-long operation in the northern West Bank has been one of the biggest seen since the Second Intifada uprising by Palestinians more than 20 years ago, involving several brigades of Israeli troops backed by drones, helicopters, and, for the first time in decades, heavy battle tanks. "There is a broad and ongoing evacuation of population, mainly in the two refugee camps, Nur Shams, near to Tulkarm and Jenin," said Michael Milshtein, a former military intelligence official who heads the Palestinian Studies Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies.



PHOTO: AFP

Two Palestinian boys sit atop a broken sculpture of Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock shrine that was destroyed by Israeli forces during a military raid in Qabatiya, in the north of the occupied West Bank, yesterday.



Enough talking,
it's time
to act!

Poland's PM Donald
Tusk urges stronger
defences along EU
borders with Russia

AIDING IRANIAN OIL SALES

US slaps sanctions on four Indian firms

TNN, New Delhi

The United States has imposed sanctions on four Indian companies citing their alleged role in Iran's petroleum and petrochemical industry. The move, announced by the US department of the treasury on Monday, is part of Washington's continued pressure campaign against Tehran's oil trade.

A press release from the treasury's office of foreign assets control (OFAC) revealed that the US had sanctioned Austinship Management Pvt Ltd, BSM Marine LLP, Cosmos Lines Inc, and Flux Maritime LLP.

These companies have been accused of facilitating the transportation of Iranian petroleum-related products, exposing them to severe restrictions under US law. This marks the second wave of sanctions targeting Iran's oil exports since US President Donald Trump issued

a national security memorandum on February 4, instructing authorities to intensify pressure on the middle eastern country.

As part of this crackdown, over 30 individuals and vessels across multiple countries, including the UAE, China, and Hong Kong—have also been sanctioned.

"Iran continues to rely on a shadowy network of vessels, shippers, and brokers to facilitate its oil sales and fund its destabilising activities," said US treasury secretary Scott Bessent.

"The United States will use all our available tools to target all aspects of Iran's oil supply chain, and anyone who deals in Iranian oil exposes themselves to significant sanctions risk."

The US state department has additionally designated eight entities based in India, Iran, Malaysia, Seychelles, and the UAE for their alleged involvement in the trade of Iranian oil.

EUROPE'S SECURITY UK's Starmer boosts defence spending

REUTERS, LONDON

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said yesterday he would increase defence spending to 2.5 percent of GDP every year by 2027, rising to 3 percent after 2029, a clear signal to US President Donald Trump that Britain will step up its efforts to boost Europe's security.

On the eve of his departure to meet Trump in Washington, Starmer told parliament he was bringing the increase in defence spending forward to offer Europe more support as the US spearheads peace talks with Russia over its war in Ukraine.

With public spending already stretched in Britain, Starmer said the increase would mean a cut to international aid spending. "Starting today, I can announce this government will begin the biggest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War," the PM said, adding that combined with spending on the intelligence services, it would reach 2.6 percent from 2027.

Trump overshadows debate to pick next Canadian PM

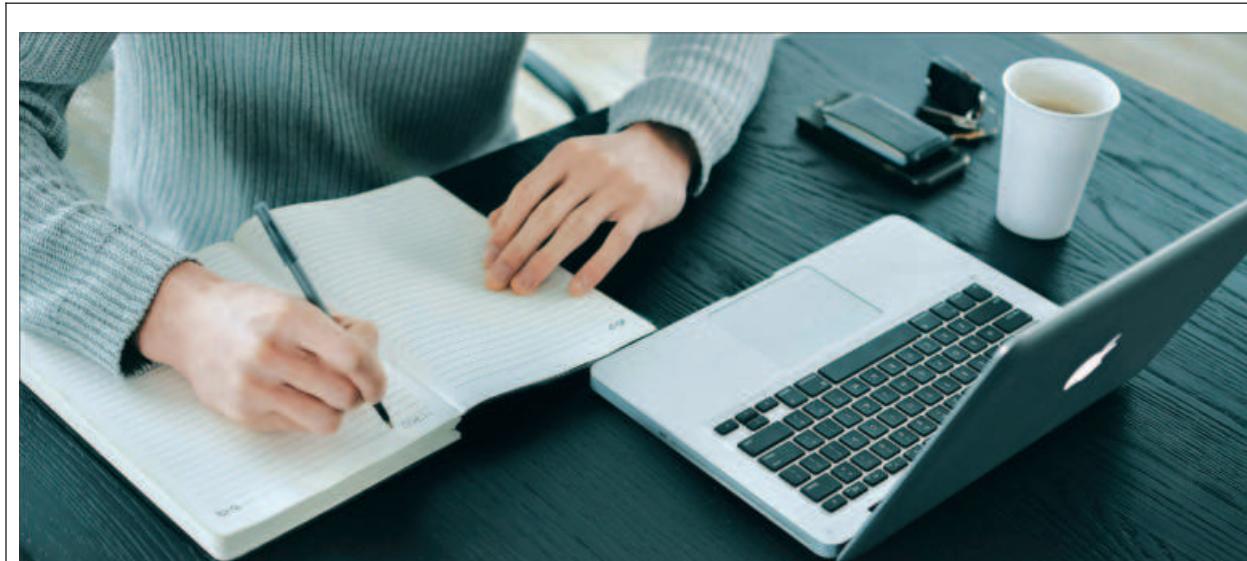
AFP, Montreal

US President Donald Trump and his threats to slap punishing tariffs on Canada dominated a televised leadership debate Monday as part of the race to become the country's next prime minister.

The contenders to succeed Justin Trudeau clamoured to present themselves as the best choice to take on the mercurial American president, calling him "a threat" and warning that "he wants our country."

Former central banker Mark Carney, the frontrunner in the race, is favored by Canadians to deal with Trump on trade and other US bilateral issues, according to polls. "We have to recognize that the Trump of today, he's not the same Trump he was before," Carney said. "He's more isolationist, more nationalist, more aggressive."

"He used to want a piece of our markets. Now he wants our country," he said, alluding to Trump's repeated remarks urging Canada to become the 51st US state. Former deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland, also in the running, said Trump was "the biggest threat to Canada" in nearly a century.



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