

8 killed as Russia hits Odesa, east Ukraine

AFP, Kyiv
A Russian ballistic missile strike overnight on the southern Ukrainian port city of Odesa killed four people and damaged a Barbados-flagged cargo ship, authorities said yesterday.

The attack late Tuesday came as Ukraine endorsed an American proposal for a 30-day ceasefire and agreed to immediate negotiations with Russia. Ukrainian officials said the attack occurred as the ship was being loaded with a grain consignment intended to be sent to Algeria.

“Unfortunately, four people died – citizens of Syria. The youngest victim was 18, the oldest was 24 years old. Two more people were wounded – a Ukrainian and a Syrian,” Oleksiy Kuleba, vice prime minister for reconstruction, wrote on social media.

“Russia is attacking Ukraine’s infrastructure, including ports that are involved in ensuring the world’s food security,” he added.

Separately, the governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region said a 47-year-old woman was killed during a Russian missile attack on the central city of Kryvyi Rig, the hometown of President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The Ukrainian air force said that in total Russia had launched three missiles at the war-battered country overnight as well as 133 drones of various types.

Ukrainian air defence units shot down 98 of the drones, the air force added.

Prosecutors in the eastern Ukrainian region of Donetsk, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia, said separately that three people had been killed and two wounded in Russian strikes.



This handout photograph taken and released by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine yesterday, shows a destroyed building at the site of a strike in Kryvyi Rig, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO: AFP

30-DAY CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL IN UKRAINE Ball in Putin’s court Says West as Zelensky expects ‘strong’ action from US if Russia refuses truce

AGENCIES

Kyiv’s Western allies upped the pressure on Russia yesterday to respond to a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire plan, after Ukraine backed the proposal aimed at ending the three-year war.

In its first comments on the proposition, the Kremlin said it was waiting for details from Washington.

US President Donald Trump’s administration lifted a freeze on military aid to Ukraine after Kyiv accepted the plan, the latest in a rapid-fire series of developments on the conflict.

“The idea of a 30-day ceasefire is an important and correct step towards a just peace for Ukraine... Now it’s up to (President Vladimir) Putin,” Germany’s Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on social media platform X.

Scholz echoed similar demands for a Russian reply that have already been made by Washington and Kyiv.

“We’ll take this offer now to the Russians and we hope they’ll say yes to peace. The ball is now in their court,” American Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday after talks in Saudi Arabia where Ukraine backed the US truce proposal.

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that he expected strong measures from the United States if Russia rejected Washington’s proposal.

With Trump stunning allies by applying intense pressure on Kyiv and reaching out to Moscow, Ukrainian officials came to talks in Saudi Arabia

eager to make up and had proposed a partial truce on air and sea attacks.

Earlier, Russian news agencies reported that the heads of CIA and Russia’s SVR foreign intelligence agency spoke by phone on Tuesday, in the first such contact in several years.

- Rubio says minerals deal will give US ‘vested interest’ in Ukraine security
- US military aid deliveries to Ukraine resume
- US, Russia spy chiefs agree to hold regular contacts

CIA’s John Ratcliffe and SVR’s Sergei Naryshkin agreed on “regular contact” between their agencies.

In Washington, Trump said he was ready to welcome Zelensky back to the White House and may speak to President Vladimir Putin this week.

Since the US cutoff of aid and intelligence sharing, Russia has stepped up attacks on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure and seized back land in Russia’s Kursk region which Ukrainian forces had infiltrated.

Rubio yesterday said that an expected minerals deal would give the United States a “vested interest” in Ukraine’s security, although he stopped short again of promising formal guarantees.

1,383 civilians killed in Syria violence

AFP, Beirut

At least 1,383 civilians, the vast majority of them Alawites, were killed in a wave of violence that gripped Syria’s Mediterranean coast, a war monitor said yesterday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the civilians were killed in “executions by security forces and allied groups”, after a wave of violence broke out last week in the coastal heartland of the Alawite minority to which toppled president Bashar al-Assad belonged.

The Britain-based Observatory added that even as the violence subsided, the toll was still rising as bodies continued to be discovered, many on farmland or in their homes.

The latest deaths were recorded in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus and in the neighbouring central province of Hama, it said.

The violence erupted on Thursday when clashes broke out after gunmen loyal to Assad staged attacks on the new security forces.

At least 231 security personnel were killed in the ensuing clashes, according to their official toll. The Observatory said 250 pro-Assad fighters were killed.

The UN Human Rights Office said it had documented “summary executions” that appeared “to have been carried out on a sectarian basis”.

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, who led the Sunni Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) that toppled Assad, has vowed to prosecute those behind the “bloodshed of civilians” and set up a fact-finding committee.

ARREST FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY Duterte’s lawyers demand his return to Phillipines

AFP, Manila

Lawyers for former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte, believed headed for The Hague to face the International Criminal Court over his deadly crackdown on drugs, filed a petition yesterday demanding his return to Manila.

The plane taking the 79-year-old to the Netherlands resumed its journey after a stopover of several hours in Dubai on Wednesday, a flight tracking site said.

It was not possible to confirm if Duterte was still on the privately owned aircraft.

Duterte faces a charge of “the crime against humanity of murder”, according to the ICC, for a crackdown that rights groups estimate killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men, often without proof they were linked to drugs.

On Wednesday morning, his lawyers filed a Supreme Court petition – on behalf of his youngest daughter Veronica – accusing the government of “kidnapping” Duterte and demanding it “bring him back”.

But presidential palace press officer Claire Castro said cooperating with Interpol was the government’s prerogative.

“This is not just surrendering a Filipino citizen, this is surrendering a Filipino citizen who is accused of crimes against humanity, specifically murder,” she said.

At a church in the capital, some of those whose family members were killed in the “drug war” discussed the arrest.

“Duterte is fortunate, there’s due process for him,” Emily Soriano said of her son Angelito, at a press briefing organised by a local rights group.



MSF urges Israel to stop using aid as ‘bargaining chip’

AFP, Geneva

The Doctors Without Borders (MSF) medical charity yesterday claimed that Israel had “instrumentalised humanitarian needs” in Gaza, with its decision to halt aid and cut electricity into the Palestinian territory.

“Israeli authorities are yet again normalising the use of aid as a negotiation tool,” MSF emergency coordinator Myriam Laaroussi said in a statement.

“This is outrageous. Humanitarian aid should never be used as a bargaining chip in war.”

Israel halted aid deliveries to war-torn Gaza after a deadlock over a fragile ceasefire, which since January 19 has reduced hostilities after more than 15 months of relentless fighting.

And ahead of a current round of talks in Doha, Israel on Sunday halted the supply of electricity to the territory’s only desalination plant, in a move Hamas



condemned as “cheap and unacceptable blackmail”.

Describing the move as “collective punishment”, MSF demanded that Israel “end this inhumane blockade of the Strip”.

It warned that with the suspension of electricity supply, the water desalination plant in Khan Yunis in the south of the territory had already run out of fuel.

“The plant has dropped its production from 17 million to 2.5 million litres per day,” its statement said.

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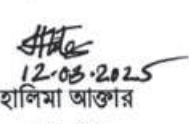
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