

Israel 'live-streamed Gaza genocide'

Amnesty says 'states watched on as if powerless'

AFP, Paris

Amnesty International yesterday accused Israel of committing a "live-streamed genocide" against Palestinians in Gaza by forcibly displacing most of the population and deliberately creating a humanitarian catastrophe.

In its annual report, Amnesty charged that Israel had acted with "specific intent to destroy Palestinians in Gaza, thus committing genocide".

Since Israel launched its offensive in Gaza on October 7, 2023, at least 52,243 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed there.

"Since 7 October 2023, when Hamas perpetrated horrific crimes against Israeli citizens and others and captured more than 250 hostages, the world has been made an audience to a live-streamed genocide," Amnesty's secretary general Agnes Callamard said in the introduction to the report.

"States watched on as if powerless, as Israel killed thousands upon thousands of Palestinians, wiping out entire

multigenerational families, destroying homes, livelihoods, hospitals and schools," she added.

Amnesty's report said the Israeli campaign had left most of the Palestinians of Gaza "displaced, homeless, hungry, at risk of life-threatening diseases and unable to access medical care, power or clean water".

Amnesty said that throughout 2024 it had "documented multiple war crimes by Israel".

It said Israel's actions forcibly displaced 1.9 million Palestinians, around 90 percent of Gaza's population, and "deliberately engineered an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe".

Even as protesters hit the streets in Western capitals, "the world's governments individually and multilaterally failed repeatedly to take meaningful action to end the atrocities and were slow even in calling for a ceasefire".

Meanwhile, Amnesty also sounded alarm over Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank, and repeated an accusation that Israel was employing a system of "apartheid".



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney gestures during an event at the Liberal Party election night headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada yesterday. Carney completed a comeback victory for the governing Liberals in Monday's election, positioning himself for a global role as a champion of multilateralism against US President Donald Trump's more protectionist policies.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Zelensky slams Putin's truce call

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky has branded a three-day truce announced by his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin as an "attempt at manipulation".

"Now there's a new attempt at manipulation: for some reason, everyone has to wait until May 8," Zelensky said in his daily address.

Putin on Monday ordered the ceasefire on May 8-10, which coincides with Moscow's World War II commemorations, drawing ire from Kyiv, which demanded Moscow pause hostilities immediately.

Ukraine said that it wanted an immediate truce with Russia for "at least 30 days".

"If Russia truly wants peace, it must cease fire immediately. Why wait until May 8th?" Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga wrote on X.

The Kremlin yesterday said that Ukraine had not responded to many offers by Russia President Vladimir Putin to start direct peace negotiations, and that it was unclear whether it would join a three-day ceasefire he has announced for next month.

100 DAYS OF TRUMP 2.0

President's 'fun' fails to uplift American spirit

AFP, Washington

After 100 days of political chaos and economic shock that have sent his approval ratings tumbling, Donald Trump hopes to regain the unqualified adulation of his supporters Tuesday at one of his bread-and-butter events: a public rally.

To mark the symbolic milestone in his second term, the Republican US president is visiting the site of one of his last campaign events, in Michigan, a battleground state that swung his way in November's election.

"The first time, I had two things to do -- run the country and survive; I had all these crooked guys," he said in an interview with The Atlantic magazine, referring to advisors and cabinet members whom he considered incompetent or disloyal lieutenants in his first term.

"And the second time, I run the country and the world," he crowed, adding "I'm having a lot of fun."

Many of the former real estate tycoon's voters remain behind Trump.

"He knows what he's doing," Karen Miner, a 57-year-old wine store owner in Reno, Nevada, told AFP.

"So far, I'm very satisfied with the job he's doing," said Frank Tuoti, a 72-year-old retired machinist from New Hampshire.

But he concedes that the tariff instability has made him "a little concerned about the economy."

Now surrounded exclusively by loyalists, Trump since January 20 has unleashed in terms of tariffs, foreign policy -- and political revenge.



In the grand entrance hallway of the White House, he has moved a portrait of Barack Obama, America's first Black president, to make way for a painting of himself surviving an assassination attempt.

And in the Oval Office, pushing the limits of presidential power, the Republican has already signed over 140 executive orders.

In the process, he has called birthright citizenship into question, attacked universities and law firms, rolled back environmental policies, entrusted his mega-billionaire ally Elon Musk with dismantling large parts of the federal bureaucracy, and launched a protectionist trade offensive against much of the world -- before partially retracting it.

Many of his executive orders have been blocked by judges, with whom the executive branch has engaged in an unprecedented bout of arm wrestling.

Trump, whose political career was built on deepening divisions, cannot claim the high approval ratings that generally accompany

the first 100 days of a US president. Opinion polls have been unanimous in noting a particularly sharp slide in his approval ratings, fueled by concern about tariffs and his attacks on the institutional order. According to a poll published Sunday by the Washington Post and ABC News, only 39 percent of Americans approve of how Trump is conducting his presidency.

With the exception of Bill Clinton and now Trump, US presidents dating back to Ronald Reagan have had an approval rating topping 50 percent after their first 100 days in office, according to the Pew Research Center.

Trump called the polls "Fake News" in a Truth Social post on Monday. "We are doing GREAT, better than ever before."

At least 64 percent of respondents said Trump is "going too far" in his efforts to expand presidential powers.

It is impossible to know how long Trump, who at 78 is the oldest US president ever elected, will maintain his frenetic pace.

Restaurant fire in China kills 22

AFP, Beijing

A restaurant fire in northeastern China killed 22 people and injured three yesterday, Beijing's state media said, with footage posted online showing fierce flames engulfing the building.

The blaze erupted at lunchtime in Liaoyang City, about 580 kilometres northeast of the capital Beijing, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

"The incident has resulted in 22 deaths and three injuries," it added.

President Xi Jinping said that the blaze had caused "significant casualties" and that the lessons from it were "profoundly serious", CCTV said.

Xi called for "every effort to treat the injured, properly handle the aftermath for the deceased and provide support to their families, swiftly determine the cause of the fire, and pursue accountability in accordance with the law," the report added.

Footage shared online and verified by AFP showed the inferno engulfing the two-storey restaurant and smoke billowing skyward.

Deadly fires are relatively common in China due to lax building codes and an often slipshod approach to workplace safety.

The country has seen a spate of such deadly incidents in recent months.

This month, 20 people died in a fire at a nursing home in northern China's Hebei province.

'Diplomacy, not confrontation' Says BRICS amid tensions

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Brazil, which chairs the 11-nation BRICS grouping that also includes Russia and China, called for closer cooperation as the world deals with conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza and trade wars under US President Donald Trump.

"We advocate diplomacy instead of confrontation, and cooperation instead of unilateralism," Brazil's Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira told the BRICS foreign ministers in Rio.

"The conflict in Ukraine continues to have a severe humanitarian impact, highlighting the urgent need for a diplomatic solution," he added.

Ministers from the bloc -- which also includes Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates -- met to hone their agenda ahead of a leaders' summit on July 6 and 7.



Vieira on Monday also called for a "complete withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza.

"The resumption of Israeli bombings and the continuous obstruction of humanitarian aid are unacceptable," he said.

The ministers were expected to issue a final joint statement yesterday in which they will call for respect for multilateralism and international market rules.

BRICS has expanded significantly since its 2009 inception as a group of four powers -- Brazil, Russia, India and China -- seeking an alternative platform to Western-led international organisations such as the G7.

It now makes up nearly half of the world's population, 39 percent of global GDP and weighs in on issues from Ukraine to Gaza to global trade.

A BRICS challenge to the hegemony of the dollar was expected to feature high on the agenda being prepared for July.

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Agnes Callamard
Secretary general, Amnesty International

Have two or more kids, avoid paying income tax

Hungary tells women to boost population

AFP, Budapest

Hungary yesterday passed a law exempting women with two or three children from paying income tax as part of a costly drive to try to reverse population decline.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban's nationalist government has since 2010 enacted several measures to seek to boost the birth rate, including subsidised loans, housing allowances for families and tax exemptions for women with four or more children.

Under the new law approved Tuesday in parliament, mothers of two under the age of 40 will get lifetime income tax exemptions from next year, with the benefits gradually expanded to all mothers of at least two by 2029.

Mothers of three will be exempted from income taxes from this October under the legislation passed on Tuesday.

Orban has touted this as "Europe's biggest tax reduction programme" that will turn Hungary into a "family tax haven" although it "isn't easy to achieve financially".

Economists warn that the measures pose a substantial budgetary challenge and the government has admitted they will cost 2.38 billion euros (\$2.71 billion) by 2029.

Critics accuse Orban of a pre-election spending splurge ahead of polls scheduled next year in the central European country of 9.5 million.

Hungary's fertility rate has declined in recent years to 1.31 live births per woman in March, according to official statistics, down from a peak of 1.61 in 2021, above the EU-wide rate of 1.53 that year.

The government's goal is a fertility rate of 2.1 by 2035, which it says would reverse the population decline.

In 2011, Hungary's birth rate was at a record low of 1.23.



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Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will be reserved on 30th April (Wednesday), 2025 for Corporate Booking.

From 1st May (Thursday), 2025 Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will remain open for all.

Contact: 01969-910100

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