

INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

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The Daily Star

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'It always seems impossible until it's done'

Top UN Gaza investigator hopeful Israeli leaders will be prosecuted for Gaza 'genocide'

AFP, Geneva

The UN investigator who this week accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza said she sees parallels with the butchery in Rwanda, and that she hopes one day Israeli leaders will be put behind bars.

Navi Pillay, a South African former judge who headed the international tribunal for the 1994 Rwanda genocide and also served as UN human rights chief, acknowledged that justice "is a slow process".

But as late South African anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela said, it always seems impossible until it's done", she told AFP in an interview.

"I consider it not impossible that there will be arrests and trials" in the future.

Pillay's Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI), which does not speak on behalf of the United Nations, issued a bombshell report on Tuesday concluding that "genocide is occurring in Gaza" -- something Israel vehemently denies.

The investigators also concluded that Israeli President Isaac Herzog, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant have "incited the commission of genocide".

Israel categorically rejected the findings and slammed the report as "distorted and



false".

But for Pillay, the parallels to Rwanda -- where some 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were slaughtered -- are clear.

"See similarities" to what is happening in Gaza, she said, pointing to "the same kind of methods".

While Tutsis were targeted in Rwanda's genocide, she said "all the evidence (indicates) it is Palestinians as a group that is being targeted" in Gaza.

Israeli leaders, she said, had made statements, including calling Palestinians

"animals", which recalled the demonising rhetoric used during the Rwanda genocide, when Tutsis were labelled as "cockroaches".

In both cases, she said the target population is "dehumanised", signalling that "it's ok to kill them".

The International Criminal Court has already issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant for suspected war crimes.

Pillay said securing accountability would not be easy, highlighting that

the ICC "does not have its own sheriff or police force to do the arrests".

But she stressed that popular demand could bring about sudden change, as it had in her home country.

"I never thought apartheid will end in my lifetime," she said.

The 83-year-old took on a particularly daunting mission four years ago when she agreed to chair the freshly-created COI tasked with investigating rights abuses in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel.

Since then, she and her two commissioners have faced a barrage of accusations of bias and antisemitism, which they deny, and a recent social media campaign urging Washington to sanction them, as it has ICC judges, Palestinian NGOs and a UN expert focused on the situation in Gaza.

The pressure has been intense, but Pillay says the hardest thing for her team has been viewing video evidence from the ground.

"Watching those videos is just traumatic," she said, pointing to images of "sexual violence of women (and abuse of) doctors who were stripped naked by the military."

"It's so painful" to watch.



Global trust in UN slips to just 58%

REUTERS, NEW YORK

A new poll of over 36,300 people worldwide showed huge support for more international cooperation on issues including trade, global health, climate and poverty, but gave largely failing grades to institutions like the United Nations, IMF and others.

The survey, commissioned by the Rockefeller Foundation and conducted in 34 countries from August 8 to September 10, offers a grim picture of confidence in multilateral institutions at a time when the United States and other advanced economies are slashing development aid.

Despite cuts in development spending and rising nationalist rhetoric around the world, 75% of those surveyed said they support global cooperation if it is proven to effectively solve problems, but just 42% see it being in their personal interest.

Only 58% of those surveyed had trust in the United Nations, which is gearing up for next week's General Assembly meetings, 60% in the WHO and 44% in the IMF.

Rockefeller Foundation President Rajiv Shah said the poll results showed a hunger for smarter and more creative solutions to replace outdated international institutions and systems.

Putin has let me down

Says Trump at end of UK state visit, hails 'unbreakable bond' with Britain, signs huge tech deal

AFP, Chequers

Donald Trump warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin had "really let me down" after he met Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday, the final day of the US president's historic UK state visit.

A day after King Charles III treated him to royal pageantry at Windsor Castle, Trump appeared at a news conference with Starmer and spared him the harsh criticism he has doled out to other leaders -- although he suggested the UK leader could use the military to curb immigration.

Starmer, meanwhile, gently nudged Trump on Ukraine and called for more pressure on Putin, as he tries to bridge the divide between Trump and European allies on Kyiv.

Trump, who has long been friendly with Putin, then issued a rebuke to the Russian leader for continuing the war.

"The one that I thought would be easiest would be because of my relationship with President Putin, but he's let me down," Trump said.

"He's really let me down."

He urged European nations to stop buying Russian oil, saying that "if the price of oil comes down, Putin's going to drop out of that war".

Referring to Starmer, Trump said "one of our few disagreements" was over the UK's plan to recognise a Palestinian state.

The US leader, embroiled in an immigration crackdown at home, offered his thoughts on immigration in Britain, revealing, "I told the prime minister I would



stop it", even if it meant calling in the military.

But for the rest of the time at the prime minister's official country house north of London, the two leaders seemed on the same page, as Trump hailed America's "unbreakable bond" with Britain and signed a huge tech cooperation deal with Starmer.

At the signing ceremony attended by a host of US tech CEOs, Starmer said he and Trump were "leaders who genuinely like each other".

The deal comes on the back of pledges of £150 billion (\$205 billion) of investment into the UK from US giants including Microsoft, Google and Blackstone.

Trump had earlier said goodbye to King Charles at Windsor, calling him a "great gentleman and a great king".

The US president and First Lady Melania Trump wrapped up their

visit later Thursday, flying out after less than 48 hours on British soil. With investment deals and a deepening alignment on Ukraine to show for the diplomatic effort, Starmer can claim some justification for granting Trump an unprecedented second state visit.

But the British leader still faces political trouble at home after sacking his ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson, over his connections to disgraced late financier Jeffrey Epstein.

Sex offender Epstein has also haunted Trump in recent weeks with further revelations about the pair's relationship in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Trump was lavished with the full pomp of the British state on Wednesday -- the second time it has done so, after his first visit in 2019.

"This is truly one of the highest honours of my life," Trump said at the state banquet.

Syria, Israel security deals by end-2025

AFP, Damascus

Syria expects to finalise security and military agreements with Israel by end-2025, an official said yesterday, in what would be a breakthrough less than a year after Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

With the United States pushing for a settlement between the two neighbours, Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani arrived in Washington to discuss talks with Israel and the possible lifting of remaining sanctions on Syria, said the foreign ministry official.

Syria and Israel remain technically at war, but opened direct negotiations after Assad was toppled by an Islamist-led coalition in December last year.

"There is progress in the talks with Israel," said the official, speaking on condition anonymity because he was not allowed to brief the media, adding that several agreements were expected to be signed "by the end of the year".

Last week, President Ahmed al-Sharaa said Syria was negotiating with Israel to reach a deal that would see Israel leave the areas it occupied in recent months.

The Syrian interim leader remains under UN sanctions and a travel ban due to his past as a wanted jihadist. He led the armed conflict that ousted Assad.



Pakistan, S Arabia ink defence pact

AFP, Riyadh

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a new strategic defence pact yesterday, with the two sides saying an attack on one country would be considered "an aggression against both".

The agreement comes just days after an Israeli strike targeted Hamas leaders in neighbouring Qatar, sending shock waves through the Gulf states that have long depended on the United States for their security.

"This agreement... aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression," read a statement published by the Saudi Press Agency.

"The agreement states that any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both," it added.

The deal was signed by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

CHARLIE KIRK COMMENTS ABC scraps Jimmy Kimmel show

AFP, Hollywood

Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show was pulled from the air Wednesday hours after the US government threatened to cancel broadcasting licenses because of comments the host made about the killing of conservative influencer Charlie Kirk.

The stunning move by network ABC to remove one of America's most influential late-night shows was blasted by critics as government censorship but celebrated by Donald Trump, who has long chafed at the comedians who mock him.

Trump, who also rejoiced in July at the cancellation of Kimmel's fellow late-night satirist Stephen Colbert, then urged that two other comedians be removed.

The furor comes a week after Kirk, a close Trump ally, was shot dead on a Utah university campus, setting off a bitter battle over responsibility in deeply polarized America, with conservatives -- including

Trump -- blaming "the radical left".

Authorities said this week that 22-year-old Tyler Robinson was the lone gunman and brought a murder charge against him.

Kimmel spoke about the shooting in his show-opening monologue on Monday.

"The MAGA gang (is) desperately trying to characterise this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them and (doing) everything they can to score political points from it," said Kimmel, referring to the president's "Make America Great Again" movement.

He then showed footage of Trump pivoting from a question about how he had been affected by Kirk's death to boasting about the new ballroom he is building at the White House, prompting laughter from the studio audience.



A protester lights flares in Marseille, southeastern France, during a day of nationwide strikes and protests called by unions over France's national budget yesterday. In a rare show of unity, trade unions have urged French people to strike in protest at the authorities' "horror show" draft budget designed to reduce France's ballooning debt.

PHOTO: AFP

China urges greater unity to avoid 'law of the jungle'

Minister slams 'hegemonic logic' at Beijing forum

AGENCIES

China's defence minister trumpeted Beijing's efforts to reshape global governance, warning yesterday against an increasingly divided world "defined by the rule of the jungle", while saying his country's strong military would be a force for peace.

The remarks come amid simmering tension between China and the United States and its allies and partners over flashpoints across East Asia, including Taiwan and the South China Sea, as well as broader economic rivalries under President Donald Trump.

Formally opening the Beijing Xiangshan Forum on security, Dong Jun said the world was at a crossroads overshadowed by Cold War thinking, hegemony and protectionism, and had to choose dialogue over confrontation.

"External military interference, seeking spheres of influence and coercing others to take sides will bring the international community into chaos," Dong added.

His remarks took veiled swipes at the United States and appeared more hawkish than his speech at last year's forum, particularly on topics such as tension over democratically governed Taiwan.



"An obsession with absolute superiority in military strength and a 'might is right' approach will lead to a divided world defined by the rule of the jungle and disorder," Dong said.

Dong's remarks follow recent speeches by President Xi Jinping against "hegemonism and power politics" and this month's large military parade in Beijing that showed off a host of new weapons.

Addressing attendees at the opening ceremony on Thursday, Dong warned of "new threats and challenges" now facing world peace.

"While the themes of the times -- peace and development -- remain unchanged, the clouds of Cold War mentality, hegemonism and protectionism have not lifted," he said.

"Historical memory must serve as a constant warning to recognise and oppose hegemonic logic and acts of bullying that are disguised in a new form."

Dong's remarks come two weeks after a grand military parade in Tiananmen Square to commemorate China's 1945 victory over a Japanese invasion, which left millions dead. The parade saw China unveil a host of new weapons, including advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles.