



**“We are closely monitoring the rising militarisation of Europe... The response to such threats will be very significant. Russia will never show weakness or indecisiveness.**

VLADIMIR PUTIN  
Russian president



Demonstrators take cover using riot police shields as they clash with the police during a rally commemorating the 57th anniversary of the 1968 Tlatelolco student massacre in Mexico City yesterday.

PHOTO:AFP

## Notion of a safe zone in south Gaza farcical: UN

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday insisted there was no safe place for Palestinians ordered to leave Gaza City, and that Israeli-designated zones in the southern Gaza Strip were “places of death”.

Since launching its air assault on Gaza City in August ahead of its ground offensive there, the Israeli military has repeatedly told Palestinians to head south.

“The notion of a safe zone in the south is farcical,” James Elder, a spokesman for the UN children’s agency UNICEF, told journalists in Geneva.

Speaking from Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, Elder pointed to how “bombs are dropped from the sky with chilling predictability; schools, which had been designated as temporary shelters are regularly reduced to rubble, (and) tents... are regularly engulfed in fire from air attacks”.

The Israeli military has urged Palestinians to relocate to a “humanitarian area” in Al-Mawasi on the coast, where it says aid, medical care and humanitarian infrastructure will be provided.

## TRUMP’S GAZA PEACE PLAN

# UN experts fear more oppression

AFP, Geneva

Dozens of UN experts yesterday cautioned that key elements of US President Donald Trump’s peace plan for Gaza were inconsistent with international law and risked deepening oppression of Palestinians.

“Imposing an immediate peace at any price, regardless of or brazenly against law and justice, is a recipe for further injustice, future violence and instability,” 35 United Nations independent experts said in a statement.

They voiced serious concerns about more than a dozen aspects of the 20-point plan unveiled by the US president last week, and backed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The experts, who are mandated by the UN Human Rights Council but who do not speak on behalf of the United Nations, said they “welcome part of the peace plan”.

They hailed the demand for a permanent ceasefire, the rapid release of unlawfully detained people, and an influx of aid.

And they celebrated the call for no forced displacement from Gaza, no annexation of the territory and the withdrawal of Israeli forces.

However, they warned that other elements of the plan were “deeply inconsistent with fundamental rules of international law”.

The experts, including Francesca Albanese, the special rapporteur on rights in the Palestinian territory, insisted that any peace plan needed to ensure self-determination and accountability, and “not create further conditions of oppression”.

They slammed the plan’s call for a transitional “Board of Peace” in Gaza, which would be chaired by Trump himself, saying it was “regrettably reminiscent of colonial practices and

must be rejected”.

Similarly, the experts maintained that the proposed “International Stabilisation Force... would replace Israeli occupation with a US-led occupation, contrary to Palestinian self-determination”.

The plan would also leave partial Israeli occupation in place “indefinitely” through a security perimeter inside Gaza, which was “absolutely unacceptable”, they said.

At the same time, they decried that “de-radicalisation is imposed on Gaza only”, despite the fact that “anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab sentiments, radicalisation and public incitement to genocide have been hallmarks of dominant rhetoric in Israel over the past two years”.

The experts also warned that “amnesties offered to Hamas seem to be unconditional... denying justice for victims of international crimes”, while the plan failed to “address accountability at all for Israeli international crimes and human rights violations”.

“The future of Palestine must be in the hands of the Palestinian people,” the experts insisted.

“Not imposed by outsiders under extreme conditions of duress in yet another scheme to control their destiny.”



## US kills four in new attack off Venezuela

AFP, Washington

US forces carried out a strike on an alleged drug-smuggling boat off the coast of Venezuela yesterday, killing four people, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said.

Hegseth announced the latest strike -- which brings the number of such attacks to at least four, leaving at least 21 people dead -- in a post on X.

The latest military action comes after President Donald Trump’s administration said in a notice to Congress that he has declared that the United States is engaged in “armed conflict” with drug cartels.

## INDONESIA SCHOOL COLLAPSE

# Death toll rises to 13

AFP, Sidoarjo

The death toll in an Indonesian school collapse rose to 13 on Friday, officials said, but dozens were still believed buried under the rubble without signs of life days after the disaster.

Distraught families have been waiting anxiously near the site in the town of Sidoarjo, on Indonesia’s island of Java, hoping to receive any news of their loved ones since the building collapsed on Monday.

Part of the multi-storey boarding school collapsed suddenly as students gathered for afternoon prayers.

The head of the search and rescue office in the nearby city of Surabaya, Nanang Sigit, told reporters that “in total we found eight bodies” on Friday.

“We have evacuated 116 people; 13 of them were found dead,” he said.

Officials had said 59 people were feared missing before the eight bodies were found.

Some families gathered at the site expressed a desire to join the rescue operation because they wish to hold funerals for their loved ones.

In Islamic teachings, burials of the dead must take place as soon as possible.

Families have been able to follow the search and clearing work live on a television screen set up near the site.

The school collapse was so violent it sent tremors across the neighbourhood, according to residents.

Investigators have been looking into the cause of the collapse, but initial signs pointed to substandard construction, experts have said.

The rescue operation is complex because vibrations happening in one place can affect other areas, officials said.



PHOTO:REUTERS

Members of a forensic team work outside the Manchester synagogue, where multiple people were killed on Yom Kippur in what police have declared a terrorist incident, in north Manchester, Britain, yesterday. British police yesterday said they accidentally shot a victim who died in the attack on a synagogue in Manchester, as well as one of the survivors, as they attempted to stop an attacker who appeared to be wearing an explosive belt.

## Trump sets Sunday deadline for Hamas

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On the ground on Friday, Gaza’s civil defence agency reported heavy air bombardment and artillery shelling on Gaza City.

At least 49 Palestinians were killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, including 31 in Gaza City alone, according to medical sources speaking to Al Jazeera.

The Israeli military is waging an air and ground offensive on the territory’s largest urban centre, from which hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee.

The UN yesterday reiterated there was no safe place in Gaza and that Israel-designated zones in the south were “places of death”.

Amnesty International condemned a “catastrophic wave of mass

displacement” as Israel intensified its Gaza City offensive.

The rights group said hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, many of whom had already been displaced multiple times, were being forced into “overcrowded enclaves in the south... that lack access to clean water, food, medical care, shelter and life-sustaining infrastructure”.

As Hamas mulled Trump’s peace plan this week, a Palestinian source close to the group’s leadership told AFP on Wednesday that the Islamist movement wanted to amend some clauses, including the one on disarmament.

Hamas leaders also want “international guarantees” for a full Israeli withdrawal and that no

assassination attempts would be made inside or outside Gaza, the source added.

Another source familiar with the negotiations told AFP that the group was split over Trump’s plan.

Structurally, the group’s leadership is divided between officials based in the Gaza Strip and those abroad, particularly in Qatar.

Much of Hamas’s leadership has also been wiped out in Israeli attacks throughout the war.

The source told AFP that “the first (opinion) supports unconditional approval, as the priority is a ceasefire under Trump’s guarantees, with mediators ensuring Israel implements the plan”.

“The second has serious reservations regarding key clauses...

They favour conditional approval with clarifications reflecting Hamas’s and the resistance factions’ demands,” the source added.

Hugh Lovatt, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said “ultimately it’s not just about convincing Hamas leadership in Doha, but also the leadership in Gaza, as well as Hamas members and fighters in Gaza”.

“Additionally, Hamas must then be able to convince other factions in Gaza,” he added.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed at least 66,288 Palestinians, according to health ministry figures in the Hamas-run territory that the United Nations considers reliable.

## Candidates to get

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be decided through the judicial process.”

Salahuddin also commented on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus’ interview with Zeteo journalist Mehdi Hasan in New York.

“At one stage of the interview, the chief adviser said, ‘The interim government’s time limit was not mentioned when it was formed. They themselves will decide this time limit. Some people want it to stay for 5, 10, even 50 years,’” he said.

It would have been better if the chief adviser did not raise this matter, the BNP leader said.

The chief adviser himself already fixed the time, announcing that the election will be held in February, not December, Salahuddin said. “We are waiting for the election schedule to be announced.”

## UN-backed climate banking alliance ceases operations

AFP, Paris

The Net-Zero Banking Alliance, a UN-backed initiative seeking carbon neutral investments by banks, announced Friday its immediate shutdown -- at a time of faltering climate commitments in the United States and Europe.

Launched in 2021 under the UN Environment Programme’s Finance Initiative, the NZBA aimed to get banks to slash the carbon footprint of their loans and investments, and help drive the transition to a net-zero economy by 2050. At its peak, the group counted nearly 150 members.