

World gave Israel 'licence to torture Palestinians'

Says UN expert

AFP, Geneva

The world has given Israel "a licence to torture Palestinians", a UN expert said Monday, with life in the occupied territories "a continuum of physical and mental suffering".

Francesca Albanese, the UN's special rapporteur on the rights situation in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, alleged that "torture has effectively become state policy" in Israel.

"Israel has effectively been given a licence to torture Palestinians, because most of your governments, your ministers, have allowed it," she said, as she presented her latest report to the UN Human Rights Council.

Albanese has faced harsh criticism, allegations of anti-Semitism and demands for her removal, from Israel and some of its allies, over her relentless



criticism and long-standing accusations of "genocide".

"Francesca Albanese is not a promoter of human rights; she is an agent of chaos... and any document she produces is nothing but a politically-charged, activist rant." Israel's mission in Geneva said in a statement Monday.

Albanese "advocates dangerous extremist narratives to undermine the very existence of the State of Israel", it said. Albanese's report claimed Israel was systematically torturing Palestinians on a scale "that suggests collective vengeance and destructive intent".

"Torture extends far beyond prison walls, in what can only be described as a torturous environment imposed by Israel across the entire occupied Palestinian territory," she told the Human Rights Council.

She said torture destroys the conditions that make life meaningful, stripping away human dignity, leaving empty shells behind.

"The testimonies that I and many others are documenting are not only tragic stories of suffering; they are evidence of atrocity crimes targeting the totality of the Palestinian people," she said.



An emergency worker walks at the site of a building damaged during overnight Iranian missile barrages in central Israel, amid the ongoing conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran, in Tel Aviv, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

ATTACKS ON POWER PLANTS

Trump's halt to Iran ultimatum raises doubt

CNN ONLINE

President Donald Trump's recent reversal on his big red line for Iran is prompting some questions on what, exactly, is motivating his wartime decision-making.

On Saturday evening, Trump said Iran had 48 hours to either open up the Strait of Hormuz and unshackle the global economy or he would strike Iran's biggest power plant. By Monday morning, he said he would give it five more days, citing improved negotiations with Tehran.

But Iran has denied any dialogue with Washington. And while there's certainly reason to not take officials at their word, the diverging stories — and Trump's own credibility problems — open the possibility that something else motivated him to back down. That includes possible fears that such a move could escalate the war and global economic pain.

Trump's critics are calling it Trump's latest TACO — an acronym for "Trump Always Chickens Out." That's difficult to prove, but the decision follows another undeniable Trump pattern: His announcements often seem conveniently tied to the open and close of financial markets.

And he's repeatedly made these kinds of announcements at times that seem geared towards the markets — regardless of how substantive and lasting the



A member of the Iranian Red Crescent comforts a resident of a destroyed apartment block in northern Tehran. PHOTO: AFP

declarations themselves turned out to be.

A major one was his "Liberation Day" global tariffs on April 2. The press conference was scheduled for 4:00 pm Eastern time, but after talking for a while, Trump announced the actual details shortly after markets closed at 4:30 pm.

He also said the tariffs wouldn't start until shortly after midnight on Saturday, April 5 — when markets would also be closed.

A week later, after a historically rough week for the stock market, Trump posted minutes after the markets opened at 9:30 am Eastern Time, "BE COOL! The next

day, after markets had slumped to their lowest level of the year, he announced a 90-day pause on nearly all tariffs over 10 percent — which then sent stocks to their best single day since 2008.

It also seems telling that there was still about 12 hours left for Trump to sus out just how serious Iran was about its purported interest in a deal. That might have been wise, given how much Trump has warned Iran can't be trusted. Why not just wait a bit longer to make sure?

But now, Trump has conveniently delayed his own red line — as it happens, until after the markets are closed for the weekend.

China mapping ocean floor

Prepares for sub warfare with US

REUTERS, Sydney

China is conducting a vast undersea mapping and monitoring operation across the Pacific, Indian and Arctic oceans, building detailed knowledge of marine conditions that naval experts say would be crucial for waging submarine warfare against the US and its allies.

In one example, the Dong Fang Hong 3, a research vessel operated by Ocean University of China, spent 2024 and 2025 sailing back and forth in the seas near Taiwan and the US stronghold of Guam, and around strategic stretches of the Indian Ocean, ship-tracking data reviewed by Reuters shows.

In October 2024, it checked on a set of powerful Chinese ocean sensors capable of identifying undersea objects near Japan, according to Ocean University, and visited the same area again last May. And in March 2025, it crisscrossed the waters between Sri Lanka and Indonesia, covering approaches to the Malacca Strait, a critical chokepoint for maritime commerce.

With top figures dead, who is now running Iran?

REUTERS

Iran's veteran supreme leader and a host of other top figures and Revolutionary Guards commanders have been killed in US Israeli strikes but the ruling system has maintained its ability to strategise and operate in the war that began on February 28. Here is a guide to who now wields power and influence in a depleted but resilient hierarchy:

IS SUPREME LEADER REALLY IN CHARGE?

Iran's veteran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in one of the first strikes of the war. In office since 1989 he enjoyed unquestioning obedience throughout the system and the last say on all major issues.

Under Iran's official ideology of velayat-e faqih, or 'rule of the Islamic jurist', the supreme leader is a learned cleric wielding temporal power on behalf of Shia Islam's 12th imam, who disappeared in the ninth century.

The leader's office, known as the bayt, has a large staff that shadows other parts of Iran's government, allowing the leader to intervene directly across the bureaucracy.

The new leader, Khamenei's son Mojtaba, has inherited the role and its extensive formal powers, but he lacks the automatic authority enjoyed by his father. The choice of the Revolutionary Guards, he may also be beholden to the hardline military corps.

ISLAMIC REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS CORPS
The Guards have been growing in influence for decades, but in the midst of a war and after the killing of Ali Khamenei and installation of



Mojtaba Khamenei, they have assumed an even more central role in strategic decision-making.

Long prepared to withstand decapitation of their leadership, the Guards have a "mosaic" organisational structure with a line of replacements already named for each commander, and every unit able to operate independently according to set plans.

Many top-ranking Guards commanders were killed early on — following a long list of senior commanders killed in strikes last year — but they have been replaced with other experienced men who have so far proven able to manage a complex war effort.

WHAT ROLE DOES LEADERSHIP PLAY?

Iran's political system merges clerical rule with an elected president and parliament, and they all have a significant role in running the Islamic Republic along with the Guards.

The killing of the late Khamenei's main adviser Ali Larijani was a real blow to the ruling authorities given his extensive experience, his ability to operate between Iran's different power centres and his skills negotiating with the outside world.

Other capable, experienced political figures remain but the more prominent ones likely to step into the shoes of Larijani and other assassinated individuals may be more hardline than those who have been killed.

WHO ARE SOME OF THE BIG NAMES LEFT?

Revolutionary Guards head Ahmad Vahidi, revolutionary Guards' Qods Force chief Esmail Qaani, revolutionary Guards naval head Alireza Tangsiri, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, judiciary Head Ayatollah Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei, President Masoud Pezeshkian, former Supreme National Security chief Saeed Jalili, Guardian Council member Ayatollah Alireza Arafii, Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

Colombia military plane crash kills 66

Four still missing; rescuers shuttle dozens of survivors to nearby hospitals

REUTERS, Bogota

A Colombian military plane crashed in a takeoff disaster on Monday, killing 66 people as rescuers shuttled dozens of survivors to nearby hospitals and searched for four who were still missing, according to a top official.

The Lockheed Martin-built Hercules C-130 transport plane was carrying 128 people, including 11 Air Force members, 115 army personnel and two national police officers, according to Hugo Alejandro Lopez, head of the nation's armed forces.

The death toll was nearly double that of the previous figure given by authorities, who continued search and recovery efforts at the site of the deadly crash.

The accident occurred as the plane was taking off from Puerto Leguizamo, on the border with Peru, Defense Minister Pedro Sanchez said on X.

The plane was believed to have suffered an impact near the end of the runway as it was taking off, firefighter Eduardo San Juan Callejas told Caracol, with a wing of the plane later clipping a tree as it was plummeting.

The crash caused the plane to catch fire and detonate some sort of explosive devices on board, he added.

Residents of the remote area were the first to pull out survivors, with videos showing men speeding down a dirt road with wounded soldiers on the back of their motorcycles.

Military vehicles later arrived, though authorities said the crash site was difficult to reach, impeding rescue efforts. Lopez said that 57 of the survivors had been hospitalized, with 30 of them in non-serious condition at a military clinic.



Firefighters work at the site of a building damaged during overnight Russian drone and missile strikes in Poltava, Ukraine, yesterday. A barrage of Russian missiles and drones killed five people across Ukraine, regional authorities said. PHOTO: REUTERS

US OIL BLOCKADE Aid flotilla arrives in Cuba

AFP, Havana

The first boat of a flotilla carrying medical supplies, food and solar panels reached Cuba yesterday to aid the island as a US fuel blockade deepens its energy crisis.

The Maguro shrimp fishing boat docked in Havana three days later than hoped after battling strong winds, currents and a pesky battery during its journey from Mexico.

As they approached Havana's colonial-era fortification, the international activists stood on the cabin roof of the boat — symbolically renamed "Granma 2.0" as a tribute to the yacht used by Fidel Castro's guerrilla fighters to launch his revolution in 1956.

They held a sign reading "Let Cuba live" while others waiting for them on the dock chanted "Cuba yes! Blockade no!"

Two more ships were due to arrive yesterday or today.