

“

We have to be prepared... We are now faced with an urgent challenge to replace American strategic enablers and heavy weaponry.

Andrius Kubilius, EU defence commissioner, as US weighs scaling back its military presence on the continent

We spent all of this money. And then when we want to maybe have help on small stuff... They say no we would rather not help. Stupid thing to say, because we can say that to them if we want, and we might.

Donald Trump slams Nato over Iran war

On the surface, these crises [climate and energy] may seem separate. But they share the same destructive origin: Fossil fuels.

UN chief Antonio Guterres urges world to act fast to limit global warming



Palestinian Saud al-Atrash prays as Israeli security forces demolish the family home and shops, citing the lack of a building permit in the village of Qilqes, a few kilometres from the Israeli settlement of Beit Hagai, just south of the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Hebron yesterday. Excluding east Jerusalem, which was occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967, some 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank, along with about three million Palestinian residents.

PHOTO: AFP

UN REPORT ON GAZA ATROCITIES

‘Israel targeting children as part of ongoing genocide’

AFP, Geneva

Israel is deliberately targeting Palestinian children in what has become a key factor in an ongoing “genocide” in Gaza, United Nations investigators charged yesterday, in a report slammed by Israel.

The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry said it had found evidence that “Palestinian children have been deliberately targeted and killed by Israeli security forces”.

This, it said, was a key factor in establishing “the genocidal intent of the Israeli authorities and security forces to destroy the larger Palestinian group in Gaza”.

The three member investigative team, which does not speak for the UN itself, first determined in a report last September that Israel had committed “genocide” in the war in Gaza -- a finding Israel flatly rejected.

In yesterday’s follow-up report, they said the intense scale and systematic nature of Israeli military operations had continued, resulting in the “unprecedented” death, injury and trauma of Palestinian children.

There were “reasonable grounds” to conclude that Israel’s authorities and security forces “have continued to commit the crime of genocide” in Gaza, they said.

Israel, which has long been harshly critical of the commission, slammed the report as “defamatory” and a “libellous sham”.

The commission, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2021, examined for its latest report crimes affecting Palestinian children, and how living conditions imposed by Israel in Gaza were “resulting in preventable mortality of children”.

“Israeli authorities and security forces have deliberately targeted Palestinian children resulting in genocide, crimes against

humanity and war crimes in the Gaza Strip, and war crimes in the West Bank,” the team said in a statement.

The commission said that severe physical and mental injuries, mass trauma, orphanhood, separation, disability, repeated displacements, starvation, and the collapse of education and healthcare had “erased

childhood” in Gaza and would continue to affect the territory’s children throughout their lives.

“By targeting children, Israel is attacking the very capacity of the Palestinian people to exist and to determine their future,” said Indian judge Srinivasan Muralidhar, who chairs the inquiry.

“Even after the October 2025 ceasefire, children continue to be killed and seriously injured.”

The report comes days after the UN children’s agency UNICEF said at least 265 children had been killed and hundreds more wounded in Gaza since the ceasefire between

Israel and Hamas took effect. UNICEF said children had been shot, bombed and struck by quadcopters, killed in tents, in schools and while playing football or fishing.

Israel’s war on Gaza, which started on October 7, 2023, has killed more than 72,800 Palestinians, according to the Hamas-run territory’s health ministry. The UN inquiry said that during the first two years of the war at least 20,179 children were killed and 44,143 injured “as a direct result of the hostilities in Gaza”.

The killing and maiming of Palestinian children “was part of a strategy to destroy the biological continuity and future existence of the Palestinian group in Gaza”, it said.

By targeting children, the report said, “Israel is eroding the foundational structure of Palestinian society, weakening the demographic vitality”.

Israel was responsible for causing a “severe orphan crisis”, while wounded youngsters “face a lifetime of disability” -- now “a defining demographic reality” among Gaza’s children, it said.

The siege of Gaza “directly undermined reproductive and newborn health”, while the collapse of public health programmes “eroded the conditions necessary for a healthy next generation”.

The report listed Israeli divisions, brigades and units that may be responsible for killing children, in specific incidents in Gaza and the West Bank.

Besides Gaza, the commission also documented a sharp increase in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinian children in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967.

The commission urged all UN member states, including Israel, to ensure accountability for crimes committed.

Israel should ‘break free’ of US military aid

Says Netanyahu

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called again for his country to increase its military autonomy and reduce its reliance on support from the United States, according to a statement released yesterday by his office.

“I deeply appreciate the support we have received from our American friends, but we need to break free from dependency and build our own independent armaments network,” the premier told reserve officers on a training course in the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu was speaking on June 18, a day after the US and Iran agreed an initial deal to end the Middle East war, which has been fiercely opposed in Israel.

“Today I say: We need our own independent armaments network. We must manufacture our own armaments,” Netanyahu said.

Since its founding in 1948, Israel has received more than \$300 billion, adjusted for inflation, in US economic and military assistance, according to figures from the Council on Foreign Relations, far more than any other country has received.

Under an agreement signed in 2016 and in force since 2019, it receives financial assistance for the purchase of around \$3.8 billion of weapons a year, accounting for around 15 percent of the defence budget. That deal runs until 2028.

NATO DELEGATION SNUB

Czech president moves court against govt

REUTERS, Prague

Czech President Petr Pavel appealed to the Constitutional Court in a dispute over the scope of his authority after the government denied his request to lead the Czech delegation at a Nato summit next month, the presidential office said yesterday.

The government, led by Pavel’s former rival for presidency Andrej Babis, said on Monday it would not include Pavel, a former senior Nato official, in its delegation to the alliance’s summit in July, saying it was up to the government to defend its positions, including low defence spending.

“I consider the decision to exclude the president from the delegation to be an unprecedented and extremely unfortunate step,” Pavel said in a separate statement.

He said that presidents had led Czech delegations at 19 out of 20 past Nato summits under various presidents and governments, with the one exception being for health reasons.

The court said it had received the complaint and would consider giving it priority. It was not clear whether the court would rule in time for Pavel to potentially take part in the summit.

Under the Czech constitution, the president has limited powers and foreign policy is defined by the government.

Pavel, a career general who led the Czech army and also served as the head of Nato’s Military committee from 2015 to 2018, has insisted that he take part in the July 7 to 8 summit in the Turkish capital, Ankara.

He has been a strong supporter of Ukraine in its defence against Russia, while Babis’ cabinet has scaled back support.



Nepal’s ex-finance minister arrested in graft probe

AFP, Kathmandu

Police in Nepal arrested a former finance minister in a money-laundering case, officers said yesterday, the latest case involving a senior ex-official since 2025 anti-corruption protests toppled the government.

Bishnu Paudel, who was arrested on Monday, is also a vice-chair of the Communist CPN-UML party of former prime minister KP Sharma Oli, whose government was brought down in the September uprising.

“The department will investigate his involvement in money laundering,” Nepal Police spokesman Abhi Narayan Kalle told AFP.

Nepal’s Prime Minister Balendra Shah, a rapper-turned politician, was elected in March vowing to crack down on graft. Oli, who lost his parliamentary seat to Shah, called Paudel’s arrest a “political stunt” and accused Shah’s government of authoritarian behaviour.

CPN-UML publicity head Niraj Acharya said: “We will follow the rule of law and our leaders are ready for any kind of test.”

Oli and his former interior minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested in March -- a day after Shah took office -- and questioned for their alleged role in the deadly 2025 crackdown on protesters. They were released after nearly a fortnight. Neither man was charged, and both deny responsibility for the violence.

The 2025 protests began as demonstrations against a brief social media ban but were fuelled by broader public anger over graft and the struggling economy.

At least 76 people were killed and more than 2,500 wounded during two days of violence.

Heatwave continues to scorch Europe

40 drown in France as people seek relief from extreme heat



REUTERS, Paris

Forty people have drowned in France over recent days as they sought to cool down to escape record heat, the prime minister said, as a heatwave swept across much of Europe.

Britain, Italy, Switzerland and Spain were also sweltering in extreme heat, with record temperatures in some regions disrupting schools and transport networks.

Europe is warming at more than twice the global average, according to the World Meteorological Organization, making such prolonged heat episodes increasingly likely.

Much of France is under severe heat alert and set to experience temperatures around 40 degrees Celsius yesterday, Meteo France said, with temperatures of up to 43 C expected in some parts of western France.

Across France, people have been jumping into canals and rivers to cool off. French sports minister Marina Ferrari said she understood the urge to escape the heat but warned against swimming in unauthorised or dangerous areas.

Europe’s heatwave is driven by a weather pattern known as an Omega block, because it takes the shape of the Greek letter, with a bulge of hot air in the middle and cooler air either side, allowing temperatures to build day after day.

Meteo France said current conditions were comparable to the August 2003 heatwave, which lasted 16 days and led to an estimated 80,000 excess deaths across Europe, according to the EU.