

World News

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Israeli air strike kills 10 in a school housing the displaced, medics say

European foreign ministers call on Israel to allow aid pass unhindered into Gaza

An Israeli air strike on a school sheltering displaced families in northern Gaza killed at least 10 people yesterday, while another hit damaged a children's hospital, medics said, as three European leaders urged Israel to end its blockade on aid.

Since a January ceasefire collapsed on March 18th, Israeli attacks have killed more than 1,600 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health authorities, and hundreds of thousands have been displaced as Israel seized what it calls a buffer zone of Gaza's land.

Israel has also imposed a blockade on all goods into Gaza, including fuel and electricity, since the beginning of March.

Yesterday, the foreign ministers of Germany, France and Britain jointly called on Israel to adhere to international law and allow the unhindered passage of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

They also urged the ceasefire to be restored and for remaining hostages held by militant group Hamas to be released.

"Humanitarian aid must never be used as a political tool and Palestinian territory must not be reduced nor subjected to any demographic change," the ministers said in a statement.

Israeli foreign ministry spokesperson Oren Marmorstein rejected the statement, asserting there was no shortage of aid in Gaza.

Doctors and civilians, though, say that medical supplies and food are running low.

Medics said the air strike on the Yaffa School in the Tuffah area of Gaza City set fire to tents and classrooms. There has been no Israeli comment on the school attack.

Some furniture was still in



■ The scene after an attack on Yaffa School in Gaza City yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: HAMZA Z. H. QRAIEQA/ANADOLU VIA GETTY

flames several hours after the strike as people sifted through blackened classrooms and the schoolyard in search of belongings.

"We were sleeping and suddenly something exploded, we started looking and found the whole school on fire, the tents here and there were on fire, everything was on fire," Um

Mohammed Al-Hwaiti said. "People were shouting and men were carrying people, charred [people], charred children, and were walking and saying, 'Dear God, dear God, we have no one but you'. What can we say? Dear God, only," she told Reuters.

Thirty six deaths
Medics said at least 36 people had been killed in Israeli strikes across Gaza yesterday.

The Gaza health ministry said an Israeli missile hit the upper building of the Durra

Gaza's healthcare system is close to Israel's blockade

Children's Hospital in Gaza City, damaging the intensive care unit and destroying the solar panel system that feeds the facility with power. No one was killed in the hospital strike.

Gaza's healthcare system is close to collapse due to Israel's blockade, which it says is aimed

at pressuring the Hamas militants who run Gaza to release 59 remaining Israeli hostages captured in the October 2023 attacks that precipitated the war.

Hamas says it is prepared to free them but only as part of a deal that ends the war.

Israel has said that Hamas must also lay down its arms, a demand the militant group rejects.

Hamas yesterday released an undated and edited video purportedly of a hostage who identified himself as Omri Miran (48).

In the video, Mr Miran said he had spent two birthdays in captivity. Throughout the war, Hamas has released videos of hostages pleading for their release.

Israeli officials dismiss them as propaganda designed to put pressure on the government.

The health ministry said many Palestinian victims of Israeli military strikes remained trapped under buildings as rescue teams are unable to reach them because of ongoing bombardments. - Reuters

Ireland must 'box clever' in EU on tariffs



Jack Power
Europe Letter

A lot still to play for in escalating EU trade fight with US over tariffs

Former German chancellor Angela Merkel was said to have a knack for dressing up some decisions that suited Germany as being in the European Union's interest. The long-time German leader was good at getting her way without being seen as narrowly looking out for her own home patch, according to one person inside the room at summits of EU leaders during Merkel's time.

This is something the Irish Government will have to get better at as it navigates the tariff row kicked off by US president Donald Trump. Ireland is the most exposed of the EU's 27 states to a full blown trade war with the US, given the outsized role US pharmaceutical and tech multinationals play in its economic success.

Government Buildings scored an early win in its lobbying efforts to tone down the EU's first swipe back at the US. The European Commission, the EU executive arm responsible for the bloc's trade policy, was convinced to drop bourbon and dairy from a list of US products it planned to hit with retaliatory tariffs.

Ireland feared that putting import levies on bourbon and dairy coming from the US would draw even higher tariffs from Trump on Irish whiskey and butter, two of its big exports stateside.

France and Italy also feared their exports of wine and cheese would be singled out by Trump. Political pressure from Paris and Rome had a big role in the commission's u-turn.

On ice
The EU's package of counter-tariffs has been put on ice until mid-July in response to Trump's 90-day "pause" on the higher rate of tariffs he imposed on trading partners. A 10 per cent tariff still applies to most goods sold into the US from the EU, and a 25 per cent tariff remains on steel, aluminium and cars.

Trump has spoken about wanting to cut a deal, something the EU is keen on, but preliminary talks have gone nowhere. More US tariffs are likely on the way, specifically targeting pharmaceuticals.

Pharma exports account for a large chunk of Ireland's trade heading to the US, so the Government is under pressure to stand up for the industry's interests at EU level. Here it has friends in the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany, who all have big pharma sectors.

Similar to the game plan to protect spirits and dairy, Dublin has been allying itself with other like-minded capitals on pharma. This loose coalition will oppose any EU response that heavily disrupts the industry's complex transatlantic supply chain.

Things get much more difficult for Irish diplomats and politicians when it comes to tech services.

Ireland only has so much political capital to spend in Brussels. Insist on too many red lines and you will be accused of trying to box the EU in. "The tricky spot for them will be digital. They can't come with the begging bowl all the time," one commission source said of Ireland's lobbying.

The commission has insisted everything remains on the table in the escalating trade fight. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen has suggested this might include putting a levy on the advertising revenues of US tech multinationals, something Taoiseach Micheál Martin said Ireland would "resist".

To do this the EU would turn to the anti-coercion instrument, known as the "big bazooka" of its trade arsenal. The instrument would give the commission wide-ranging powers to push back against economic coercion, and has never been used before.

Using it against the US would be a big call.

They [Ireland] can't come with the begging bowl all the time

Ireland will have to "box clever" in how it voices opposition to any efforts to go after big tech, another commission source said. "There wouldn't be a whole lot of sympathy for Ireland on it."

The Government will argue that penalising US tech companies would be a serious escalation when the focus should be on bringing the temperature down and trying to negotiate.

The recent comments from von der Leyen do not mean the commission is about to launch a dramatic broadside on the operation of US tech multinationals in Europe. The anti-coercion instrument was intended as a response of last resort. So von der Leyen was never going to take the powerful deterrent off the table before serious EU-US negotiations had even begun.

The commission is leading the EU's response on tariffs but would need a majority of national capitals to back it using the so-called bazooka.

France has been pushing for the EU to hit US tech services, while Germany has been more cautious. Hard-right Italian prime minister Giorgia Meloni is opposed to any major escalation.

Nearly every leader has repeated the need for unity in how the EU responds to Trump's tariffs. Martin and Tánaiste Simon Harris will have to be creative if they are to spin protecting US tech multinationals as something that's in the best interest of not just Ireland but the EU.

Trump and Zelenskiy clash on Ukraine ceasefire

Donald Trump and Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy clashed again yesterday on efforts to end the three-year war in Ukraine, with the US president chiding Mr Zelenskiy for refusing to recognise Russia's occupation of Crimea.

Mr Trump's vice-president JD Vance said it was time for Russia and Ukraine to either agree to a US peace proposal "or for the United States to walk away from the process", echoing a warning Mr Trump gave last week.

Speaking to reporters in India, Mr Vance said the proposal called for freezing territorial lines "at some level close to where they are today" and a

"long-term diplomatic settlement that hopefully will lead to long-term peace".

"The only way to really stop the killing is for the armies to both put down their weapons, to freeze this thing," he said.

A former western official familiar with the US proposal said it also called for the recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Mr Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said yesterday in an X post that he stressed to the US in London that Ukraine "will stand firm on its core principles during the negotiations" that relate to sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Mr Zelenskiy on Tuesday reit-

erated that Ukraine would not recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea, saying: "There's nothing to talk about here. This is against our constitution."

Mr Trump, who argued with

Trump has warned that Washington could walk away

Mr Zelenskiy in a televised Oval Office meeting in March, called this an inflammatory statement that made a peace deal harder to achieve.

The US president said Crimea was lost years ago "and is not even a point of

discussion".

"Nobody is asking Zelenskiy to recognise Crimea as Russian territory, but if he wants Crimea why didn't they fight for it 11 years ago when it was handed over to Russia without a shot being fired?" Mr Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Crimea
Russian fighters seized control of the Crimean peninsula in 2014 in a move that was condemned internationally. Few countries recognise Russia's claim to Crimea.

Mr Trump scolded the Ukrainian leader and said the US was trying to stop the killing in his country and that they were

"very close to a deal" for peace.

Since taking office in January, Mr Trump has sharply altered the US approach, pressing Ukraine to agree to a ceasefire while easing many measures former US president Joe Biden's administration took to punish Russia for its 2022 full-scale invasion of its neighbour.

Nevertheless, Ukraine's foreign minister Andrii Sybiha said after yesterday's talks that Kyiv was committed to working with the US to achieve peace.

Earlier, US, Ukrainian and European officials met in London for peace talks aimed at ending the war. US secretary of state Marco

Rubio cancelled his trip there, raising questions over how much progress was being made.

Mr Rubio's no-show prompted cancellation of a broader meeting with foreign ministers from Ukraine, Britain, France and Germany, underscoring the gaps between Washington, Kyiv and its European allies over how to bring an end to the war.

Mr Trump has warned that Washington could walk away if there was no progress on a deal soon. He raised the pressure on Sunday when he said he hoped Moscow and Kyiv would make a deal this week to end the conflict. - Reuters

India reduces ties with Pakistan following tourist attack in Kashmir

RAHUL BEDI
in New Delhi

Tensions between nuclear-armed neighbours India and Pakistan have escalated following Tuesday's terrorist attack in the northern disputed Kashmir region, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others injured.

Both countries' armies were on high alert along their common frontier, following the attack by six gunmen in the mountainous Pahalgam region. India said it holds the Pakistan Army's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate responsible for the attack.

Pakistan officially denied any involvement in the attack, and its ministry of foreign affairs expressed condolences for the victims.

India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by prime minister Narendra Modi, said the bilateral Indus Waters Treaty, the river water-sharing agreement brokered by the World Bank in 1960, would be suspended. It also said the only land border crossing between the countries would be immediately closed.

India's foreign secretary Vikram Misri told reporters in Delhi that the CCS had also decided that no Indian visas would be issued to Pakistani nationals and all those who were in the country would need to return home by May 1st.

It also announced that staff at the respective high commissions in Islamabad and New Delhi will be reduced to 30 per-

The gunmen ... called upon some of the tourists to recite Islamic verses

sonnel and all military attaches from both countries at these missions will be withdrawn.

Meanwhile, senior Indian security and military officials claimed that the little-known Resistance Front, which had claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack, was a "proxy" for two globally proscribed Pakistan-based Islamist terror groups: Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Pure) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (Army of Mohammed). The officials

claimed both groups were backed by the ISI.

India charged Lashkar-e-Taiba members with the November 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks in which 166 people died. Jaish-e-Mohammed operatives were blamed on an attack on the parliament building in 2001.

Both assaults brought India and Pakistan, who have fought four wars since independence in 1947, close to conflict yet again. Mobile telephone recordings by survivors of the attack revealed that it was carried out by six gunmen dressed in Indian Army fatigues, armed with AK-47 assault rifles and equipped with body-mounted cameras.

The gunmen gathered the scattered tourists, who were spread over a mountainside accessible only by foot and horseback, claiming that they were from the Indian Army and deployed for their safety.

They asked each one their name and called upon some of them to recite Islamic verses.

As almost all the assembled tourists were Hindus and unable to recite the Koranic passage, they were shot dead.

Tory leader Badenoch backs away from confronting leadership rival

MARK PAUL
in London

Tory leader Kemi Badenoch appeared to back away from a confrontation with her front bench colleague and erstwhile leadership rival, Robert Jenrick, after he seemed to undermine her by suggesting he would work to unite the Conservatives with Nigel Farage's Reform UK.

Mr Jenrick's leaked comments, first reported in a recording obtained by Sky News, were seen as incendiary because he suggested he would unite the right "one way or the other". Many in Westminster speculated that was a veiled threat to Ms Badenoch's leadership should she keep opposing an electoral tie-up with Reform.

Mr Jenrick, a proponent of hardline anti-immigration views, was narrowly beaten by Ms Badenoch in last year's Tory leadership contest. He was subsequently appointed to her front bench as shadow justice secretary, giving him control over the party's policies on immigration, a key battleground with Reform.

students at a University College London Conservative Association dinner, where he spoke about how well Reform was doing - the party is well in advance of the Tories in most surveys.

"My worry is [Reform] become a kind of permanent or semi-permanent fixture on the British political scene. If that is the case, then life becomes a lot



Robert Jenrick was narrowly beaten in the Tory leadership race

harder for us because the right is not united," said Mr Jenrick in the leaked comments.

"And, then, you head towards the general election where the nightmare scenario is that [Labour leader and prime minister] Keir Starmer sails in through the middle as a result of the two parties being disunited. I don't know about you, but I'm not prepared for that to happen," he said. "I want the right to be united. One way or another, I'm determined

to do that and to bring this coalition together and make sure we unite as a nation as well."

During prime minister's questions in the House of Commons yesterday, Mr Starmer teased Ms Badenoch about this apparent veiled threat to her leadership from her front bench colleague. The Tory leader responded that he ought to be more worried about "his own backbenchers, not my frontbenchers" - a reference to Labour MPs fretting over government policy in trans issues in light of a recent UK supreme court ruling on the definition of a woman in equality law.

The lively PMQs session was dominated by discussion of the prime minister's position on the supreme court issue.

Afterwards, Ms Badenoch's spokesman was pressed by reporters on the Jenrick issue and responded by insisting the two Tories still "have a very good relationship".