

Fresh protests hit Greece over train tragedy

Thousands of demonstrators staged fresh protests in Greece on Sunday as anger grows over the country's deadliest rail crash, ratcheting up pressure on the government over the tragedy.

Protesters flooded Athens' Syntagma Square in front of parliament, waving banners that read "We won't forget, we won't forgive" and "We will become the voice of all the dead", AFP reported.

Fifty-seven people, many of them students, were killed when a passenger train and freight train collided head-on in central Greece on February 28.

Four railway officials have been charged but public anger has focused on long-running mismanagement of the network, and the country has been rocked by a series of sometimes violent mass protests.

On Sunday more than 8,000 demonstrators gathered outside parliament while 5,000 took to the streets of the second city Thessaloniki, police said.

"It was anger and rage that brought me here," Markella, a 65-year-old



Athens protester who gave only one name, told AFP.

Another demonstrator, 26-year-old Alexandros, added: "We're getting desperate. You don't know what to say, what to do -- all you can do is join the protest."

The rallies came in response to calls from various bodies, from trade

unions to political groups, to take to the streets.

The biggest protests over the crash so far came on Wednesday when tens of thousands demonstrated nationwide, with clashes erupting, while workers staged strikes.

Public and private sector employees are expected to walk out again Thursday. Prime Minister Kyriakos

Mitsotakis, who is fighting to be re-elected within months, has faced calls from some protesters to quit.

He has come under fire for initially pointing to "human error" for the accident, and blaming the stationmaster on duty at the time who allegedly routed the trains onto the same stretch of track by

accident.

But railway unions had long been warning about problems on the creaking, understaffed train network.

Greece's transport minister resigned after the crash, and Mitsotakis has sought to soothe public anger by repeatedly apologising and vowing a transparent probe.



Protesters march through the streets of Athens on March 12, 2023 during a demonstration over the country's worst rail tragedy in central Greece on February 28.

● ANGELOS TZORTZINIS/AFP

History will hold Trump 'accountable' for Capitol attack: Pence

Some of the thousands who stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, called for Pence to be hanged, forcing him to seek a safe location.

Trump has already declared his intention to seek a new term as president in

2024 elections, and Pence indicated he may challenge him for the Republican nomination.

The Gridiron Dinner is usually a light-hearted event with skits and musical entertainment, and Pence initially sought to poke fun. "I will wholeheartedly,

unreservedly support the Republican nominee for president in 2024 - if it's me," he said.

Near the end of his speech, Pence said there was one issue he would not joke about.

"The American people have a right to know what

took place at the Capitol on January 6th," he said, according to The Washington Post newspaper.

"But make no mistake about it, what happened that day was a disgrace, and it mocks decency to portray it in any other way."

Pence's sharp remarks aimed at Trump were unexpected at the gala.

"Was at the dinner and can confirm @Mike_Pence definitely caught the room by surprise--lots of dropped jaws," tweeted Maryam Mujica, a former State Department official.

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Three Palestinians killed in 'targeted assassination' by Israeli forces



Israeli soldiers stand guard during an operation west of Nablus in the occupied northern West Bank on March 12, 2023.

● JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP

The Israeli forces fatally shot three Palestinian men near the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, in the latest round of violence against Palestinians. The killings took place at dawn on Sunday when Israeli soldiers opened fire at four Palestinians in their vehicle near the Sarra military checkpoint, southwest of Nablus, according to the Palestinian Ma'an news agency. The Israeli forces arrested the fourth Palestinian after the shooting near the checkpoint, Press TV reported.

The Israeli occupation fired at four Palestinians at the checkpoint, killing three of them while inside their vehicle in a "targeted assassination," the official Wafa news agency said.

Wafa cited witnesses in the village adjacent to the checkpoint as saying that

shortly after the shooting, Israeli occupation soldiers stormed shops and seized the recordings of surveillance cameras to keep their crime untold. Meanwhile, Israeli media put the number of fatalities at three and claimed that the Palestinians killed in the violence were "armed gunmen."

The latest Israeli crime brings up the number of Palestinians killed by Israeli occupation forces since the beginning of the year to 84, including 15 children and an elderly woman, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

The killings came two days after Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in a raid in Jenin in the northern occupied West Bank, less than 48 hours after six others were killed in another raid in the city.

Ukraine, Russia say hundreds of troops killed in Bakhmut battle

Ukraine and Russia claimed on Saturday that hundreds of enemy troops were killed over the previous 24 hours in the fight for Bakhmut, with Kyiv fending off unabating attacks and a small river that bisects the town now marking the new front line.

Serhiy Cherevatyi, a Ukrainian military spokesperson, said that 221 pro-Moscow troops were killed and more than 300 wounded in Bakhmut. Russia's Defense Ministry said that up to 210 Ukrainian soldiers were killed in the broader Donetsk part of the frontline, Reuters reported.

While Moscow did not specify Bakhmut casualties, the eastern Donetsk town, now nearly deserted, has been the site of one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the year-long war.

Both sides have admitted to suffering and inflicting significant losses in Bakhmut, while the exact number of casualties is difficult to independently verify.

British military intelligence said on Saturday that Russia's Wagner mercenary group has taken control of most of the eastern part of Bakhmut — an advance that the group's founder Yevgeny Prigozhin claimed on Wednesday. "In the city center, the Bakhmutka River now marks the front line," the British Defence Ministry said in its daily intelligence bulletin.

Moscow says capturing Bakhmut would punch a hole in Ukrainian defenses and be a step towards seizing all of the Donbas industrial region, a major target. Kyiv says the battle is grinding down Russia's best units.



Ukrainian soldiers are seen on the move near Bakhmut, Ukraine, on March 10, 2023.

● ANATOLII STEPANOV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NEWS IN BRIEF

Global trade union leader sacked over EU graft scandal



AFP - The general secretary of the international union ITUC has been dismissed from his post, the confederation said, over his links to a European Parliament graft scandal implicating Qatar. Luca Visentini was arrested in December as part of the investigation into suspected corruption among MEPs involving Qatar and Morocco. The 54-year Italian - who was detained for two days then released, but remained a suspect - was suspended by the board of the International Trade Union Confederation in December.

China names US-sanctioned general as defense chief



BLOOMBERG - China named a general sanctioned by the US to be its new defense minister, setting up a potentially awkward encounter if he's ever paired up with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin for a meeting. General Li Shangfu was unanimously appointed minister of national defense and a state councillor — China's equivalent of a cabinet member — at the National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday.

Swiss president defends neutrality, Ukraine arms ban

AFP - Swiss neutrality is more important than ever, President Alain Berset said in an interview published Sunday, defending the controversial ban on transferring Swiss-made arms to Ukraine. "Swiss weapons must not be used in wars," he told the NZZ am Sonntag weekly. The long tradition of neutrality has been hotly debated since Russia's military operation in Ukraine in February 2022.

While the country, which is not a member of the European Union, has followed the bloc's lead on sanctions targeting Moscow, it has so far shown less flexibility on its military neutrality.