

Russia says 'no alternative' to its Karabakh mediation after US initiative



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken (c) hosts a meeting between Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan (l) and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Washington, the US, on May 1, 2023. [TWITTER](#)

Russia on Tuesday responded to US-hosted peace talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan this week saying there was "no alternative" to a deal that Moscow signed with the two warring countries in 2020.

"For the moment, there is no other legal basis that would help a resolution. There is no alternative to these trilateral documents," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, AFP reported.

Initiatives to lower tensions in the region "are possible above all on the basis of the trilateral documents signed with Russia," he said.

The United States this week is hosting negotiations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, seeking to quell recent tension over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The two sides have gone to war twice, in 1990 and 2020, leaving tens of thousands dead and clashes regularly erupt over the territory, an Armenian-majority region inside Azerbaijan.

Tensions have spiked again in recent days after Azerbaijan announced it had set up a checkpoint on the Lachin corridor, the only land link between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, sparking an angry response from Yerevan.

Armenia views the move as a violation of the ceasefire negotiated between the two sides.

Moscow brokered a ceasefire between Yerevan and Baku after the latest bout of fighting in 2020 and posted peacekeepers along the Lachin corridor.

With Russia bogged down in Ukraine and unwilling to strain ties with Azerbaijan's key ally Türkiye, the United States and European Union have sought to steer a thaw in ties.

French unions set new protest date as arrests mount



French trade unions said Tuesday they would call new mass demonstrations against President Emmanuel Macron's bitterly contested pension reforms next month, a day after hundreds of thousands turned out against the law.

The fourteenth day of protests will be held on June 6, the unions said, days before lawmakers debate a bill that would repeal the retirement changes forced through without a vote by Macron's ministers, AFP reported.

Police said almost 800,000 people turned out across France against the pension reform on Monday – the Labour Day holiday – while the hard-left CGT union tallied 2.3 million. The unions said that while they would attend new discussions with cabinet ministers on issues ranging from boosting employment among older people to reforming vocational schools, they would "reiterate their refusal of the pensions reform".

"There is deep defiance and dialogue can only resume if the government shows it is finally willing to take the unions' positions into account," they added.

Nationwide 540 people were arrested during Monday's demonstrations, including 305 in Paris, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

The capital had seen "a level of violence in the vanguard of the march... that far exceeded" previous demonstrations, Paris police chief Laurent Nunez told broadcaster France Info, blaming "hooligans".

Darmanin said three officers were "in an extremely difficult situation" although not fighting for their lives.

One policeman was in hospital with burns to his face after being struck by a Molotov cocktail.

While there was no official figure for the number of demonstrators hurt as police used tear gas, riot grenades and other weapons, at least two journalists, including an AFP photographer, reported being hit without serious injuries.

French protesters are sprayed by a water cannon in Lyon, France, on May 1, 2023. [JEFF PACHOU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES](#)

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kenyan anti-government protests resume



REUTERS – Kenyan police fired tear gas at a small group of protesters in the capital Nairobi on Tuesday as the opposition resumed anti-government demonstrations following a one-month pause.

The main opposition coalition organised three days of demonstrations in March to protest high living costs and alleged fraud in last year's election, which its leader Raila Odinga lost to President William Ruto.

Europol take down dark web drug marketplace



AP – Law enforcement agencies around the world seized an online marketplace and arrested nearly 300 people allegedly involved in buying and selling drugs, European Union law enforcement agency Europol said Tuesday.

The worldwide operation targeting the "Monopoly Market," coordinated by Europol, is the latest major takedown of sales platforms for drugs and other illicit goods on the so-called dark web, a part of the internet hosted within an encrypted network and accessible only through specialized anonymity-providing tools.

Russia summons Polish envoy over embassy school closure

AFP – Russia on Tuesday summoned the Polish embassy's charge d'affaires after Warsaw closed a school run by the Russian embassy. The RIA Novosti published a video of diplomat Jacek Sladewski entering the Foreign Ministry in Moscow, three days after Warsaw shut a school for the children of Russian diplomats. The Kremlin on Tuesday said "nothing good awaits" ties between Poland and Russia.

Sudan military faction chiefs agree May 4-11 truce in principle: *South Sudan*

Sudan's warring military factions agreed on Tuesday in principle to a seven-day ceasefire from Thursday, South Sudan announced, as more air strikes and shooting in the Khartoum region disrupted the latest short-term truce.

A statement released by the foreign ministry of South Sudan, which had offered to mediate in the conflict, said its President Salva Kiir stressed the importance of a longer truce and of naming envoys to peace talks, to which both sides had agreed, Reuters reported. The credibility of the reported May 4-11 deal ceasefire deal between Sudanese army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and paramilitary Rapid Support forces (RSF) leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagaló was unclear, given the rampant violations that

undermined previous agreements running from 24 to 72 hours.

Sudan's war has forced 100,000 people to flee over its borders and fighting now its third week is creating a humanitarian crisis, U.N. officials said earlier on Tuesday.

According to VOA News, the United Nations migration agency says at least 334,000 people have been internally displaced in Sudan since deadly fighting broke out last month between the two military factions.

The data was released Tuesday by the International Organization for Migration at a news conference in Geneva.

The conflict risks developing into a broader disaster as Sudan's impoverished neighbours deal with a refugee crunch and fighting hampers aid deliveries in a nation

where two-thirds of the people already rely on some outside assistance.

Egyptian support for dialogue

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi said Cairo would provide support for dialogue in Sudan between the rival factions, but was also "being careful about not interfering in their domestic matters".

"The entire region could be affected," he said in an interview with a Japanese newspaper on Tuesday as an envoy from Sudan's army chief, who leads one of the warring sides, met Egyptian officials in Cairo.

United Nations officials had said U.N. aid chief Martin Griffiths aimed to visit Sudan on Tuesday but the timing was still to be confirmed.

The U.N. World Food Programme said on Monday



it was resuming work in the safer parts of the country after a pause earlier in the conflict, in which some WFP staff were killed.

"The risk is that this is not just going to be a Sudan crisis, it's going to be a regional crisis," said Michael Dunford, the WFP's East Africa director.

The commanders of the

army and RSF, who had shared power as part of an internationally backed transition towards free elections and civilian government, have shown no sign of backing down, yet neither seems able to secure a quick victory. That has raised the spectre of a prolonged conflict that could draw in outside powers.

A Sudanese refugee who fled the violence in her country, sells tea and porridge to other refugees near the border between Sudan and Chad, in Koufroun, Chad, on May 1, 2023. [MAHAMAT RAMADANE/REUTERS](#)