

Israeli troops, backed by helicopter, kill five Palestinians in Jenin



Smoke is seen rising into the air during an Israeli raid in Jenin, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on June 19, 2023.

● RANEEN SAWAFTA/REUTERS

Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank killed five Palestinians on Monday, in a raid that saw seven Israeli security personnel wounded and rare helicopter fire.

The sound of gunfire was heard across Jenin as wounded Palestinians continued to arrive by ambulance to the northern West Bank city's Ibn Sina hospital in the early afternoon, an AFP journalist said. The Palestinian Health Ministry said five peo-

ple had been killed and at least 91 others were wounded in the violence. It named four of those killed: 15-year-old Ahmed Saqer, Khaled Assassa, 21, Qais Jabareen, 21, Ahmad Daraghme, 19, and Qasam Abu Saria, 29. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance group said Abu Saria was one of his fighters. Among the injured was Palestinian journalist Hazem Nasser, who was hospitalized with a gun-

shot wound, according to the Palestinian journalists syndicate. The violence marked a rare use of Israeli airpower in the territory. During the clashes, Palestinians detonated a roadside bomb next to an Israeli military vehicle. "We had five Israeli border police guys wounded, and two soldiers also lightly wounded," army spokesman Richard Hecht said. A Palestinian intelligence

official told AFP on condition of anonymity it was the first time since 2002 – during the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising – that the Israeli army has fired missiles from an aircraft during a raid in Jenin. The United Nations rights chief, Volker Turk, said he was "extremely worried by the deteriorating situation". "Unlawful killings of Palestinians by the Israeli security forces have in-

creased, including apparent extrajudicial executions," he added. Violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has escalated over the past year, especially after the hard-right cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took power in December. Since the start of the year, at least 163 Palestinians, 21 Israelis, a Ukrainian and an Italian have been killed in the tensions in the occupied territories.

China hails 'progress' in U.S. relations after Xi-Blinken talks



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China, June 19, 2023.

● LEAH MILLIS/REUTERS

China's Xi Jinping hailed "progress" in talks with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Beijing on Monday, the final engagement of a closely-watched trip aimed at ensuring the superpower's disputes do not spiral into conflict. Blinken, the first holder of his post to meet the Chinese leader since 2018, strode towards Xi with his hand outstretched at the Great Hall of the People, a venue China often uses for greeting heads of state – positive signals in the choreography of diplomacy, Reuters reported.

The two shook hands, then the delegations faced each other across a conference table bedecked with pink lotus flowers, with Xi at the head and Blinken just to his right. Xi and Blinken's roughly 30-minute meeting could help facilitate a summit between Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden later in the year. Biden and Xi last met on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia in November, pledging more frequent communication, although ties since then have deteriorated over issues ranging from Taiwan to espionage concerns.

"The two sides agreed to follow through the common understandings President Biden and I had reached in Bali. The two sides have also made progress and reached the agreement on some specific issues. This is very good," Xi told Blinken at the start of the meeting. Blinken responded by saying the two countries "have an obligation and responsibility" to manage their relationship and that the United States was "committed to doing that". His meetings in Beijing, including talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi and foreign minister Qin Gang, had been "candid and constructive," he added. It was not immediately clear from Xi's remarks or previous readouts of Blinken's meetings exactly what progress had been made. Chinese state media said Xi told Blinken in the otherwise closed-door talks that China "hopes to see a sound and steady China-U.S. relationship" and believes that the two countries "can overcome various difficulties". But he also urged the U.S. not to "hurt China's legitimate rights and interests", a signal of potential flashpoints such as Taiwan, the democratic island Beijing considers its own, which had cropped up during Blinken's previous meetings.

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N Korea says botched satellite launch was 'gravest failure'

An unusually candid North Korea has said the botched launch of a military satellite last month was the "gravest failure" but it vowed it would soon succeed in its quest, state media reported on Monday. North Korea's ruling party made the assessment of its May 31 launch at a three-day meeting that ended on Sunday, ordering workers and researchers to analyse the mission that ended with the rocket and its spy satellite payload plunging into the sea, and to prepare for another launch soon, Reuters reported.

Officials "who irresponsibly conducted preparations" for the failed launch were "bitterly criticised" at the meeting, the KCNA state news agency reported. The rocket failed "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine", North Korea said at the time. Nuclear-armed North Korea had earlier said it would launch its first military reconnaissance satellite to boost monitoring of U.S. military activities, another step in a military programme that has raised fears of war.

The North's state media said the ruling Workers' Party Central Committee also discussed bolstering nuclear capabilities and stepping up production of nuclear weapons. Leader Kim Jong-un attended the meeting, KCNA said, but it made no mention of whether he made a speech or delivered a report, as he usually does at such important policy-making sessions.



Sailors prepare to lift the wreckage of a rocket used in North Korea's failed attempt to launch its first military satellite last month from the sea.

● South Korea Defence Ministry via Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait swears in fifth government in a year



AFP – Kuwait's fifth government in less than one year took the oath of office Monday after elections returned an opposition-controlled parliament, setting the stage for further political turmoil in the oil-rich emirate. Four royals are among the 15-strong cabinet, which is appointed by the ruling Al-Sabah family and has a history of clashes with the Persian Gulf's only elected national assembly with powers to hold government to account.

Ukraine: Eight villages retaken from Russia in two weeks



REUTERS – Ukraine said on Monday it had driven Russian forces from an eighth village in its two-week-old counter-offensive, a settlement on a heavily fortified part of the front line near the most direct route to the country's Azov Sea coast. A Russian-installed official said on Sunday that Ukraine had taken control of the village, Piatykhatky, in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. He later said Moscow had pushed them out and on Monday morning he said Ukraine was attacking again.

Sudan spiralling into 'death and destruction': UN



AFP – Sudan is descending into death and destruction at an unprecedented speed, UN chief Antonio Guterres said Monday as he urged donors to step in and curb the unfolding catastrophe. "Without strong international support, Sudan could quickly become a locus of lawlessness, radiating insecurity across the region." The Sudanese Army has since April 15 been battling paramilitary forces commanded by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, after the two fell out in a bitter power struggle.