

Deadly resumption of Gaza war draws int'l regret

Iran: No solution exists other than open-ended cease-fire

The deadly resumption of Gaza war after a week-long truce has drawn international regret as Israeli warplanes pounded the besieged strip, sending scores of wounded and dead pouring into hospitals on Friday. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian slammed Israel and the United States, as its main supporter, for resuming the military campaign against the besieged Gaza Strip, warning that the progress of the war will lead to a new genocide in the Palestinian territory.

International Desk

Fighting resumed in Gaza immediately after the expiry of a week-long truce, with the first fatalities reported minutes later, according to health officials in the enclave.

He said that "No solution exists other than open-ended cease-fire, extensive delivery of humanitarian aid and agreement on fresh exchange of prisoners."

"POWs are not released with war but are instead killed in strikes," he wrote in a post on X.

Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry, also denounced the Israeli attacks, saying

that Tel Aviv, the United States and their allies are liable for the atrocities being committed against Palestinians in the besieged territory.

Ezzat el-Rashq, a member of the Hamas political bureau, said on the group's website: "What Israel did not achieve during the fifty days before the truce, it will not achieve by continuing its aggression after the truce."

'Catastrophic' resumption

The United Nations said it deeply regretted the resumption of deadly hostilities in Gaza, calling the situation "catastrophic".

"I still hope that it will be possible to renew the pause that was established. The return to hostilities only shows how important it is to have a true humanitarian ceasefire," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on X.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk branded the resumption of hostilities "catastrophic", urging all parties and states with influence to try and bring

about a cease-fire on humanitarian and human rights grounds.

"Recent comments by Israeli political and military leaders indicating that they are planning to expand and intensify the military offensive are very troubling," he added.

'Nightmare' returns to Gaza

Renewed fighting in Gaza has brought back a "nightmarish situation" for the Palestinian territory, the head of the Red Cross told AFP on Friday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the UN's COP28 climate talks in Dubai, Robert Mardini said, "People are at a breaking point, hospitals are at a breaking point, the whole Gaza Strip is in a very precarious state".

"There is nowhere safe to go for civilians," Mardini said, stressing the challenges hospitals and humanitarian organizations are facing. During the seven-day truce, 80 Israeli prisoners and 240 Palestinians were released.

Renewed fighting also

threatens the entry of aid into Gaza, where about 80 percent of the population is displaced and grappling with shortages of food, water and other essentials.

"With the resumption of hostilities, the likelihood will be that less aid will get in," Mardini said.

"More importantly, humanitarian organizations, like the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and others such as the ICRC and UN agencies, will have reduced capacities to deliver aid to the people," he added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who had met Israeli and Palestinian officials on Thursday on his third trip to the region since the war began, declined to comment on the collapse of the truce to reporters traveling on his plane.

'Genuine doubts'

On Thursday, Israel recalled its ambassador in Madrid and said it will be reprimanding Spain's top diplomat in Tel Aviv after Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said he had

"genuine doubts" about whether Israel was complying with international humanitarian law in its offensive in Gaza.

Sanchez's latest remarks came a week after he caused a diplomatic spat by using a visit to Israel to urge it to rethink its operations in Gaza, claiming its response to Hamas' attack on October 7 could not "imply the deaths of innocent civilians, including thousands of children".

However, speaking to Spain's state broadcaster, TVE, on Thursday morning, Sanchez repeated his condemnation of Hamas's attacks.

Unacceptable move

Meanwhile, Jordan's King Abdullah on Thursday urged UN aid officials and international groups to pile pressure on Israel to allow more aid into the beleaguered Gaza enclave where the humanitarian situation is worsening, officials and aid workers said.

They said the monarch told an emergency meeting in Amman of UN officials, heads of Western non-gov-

ernmental organizations and representatives of Arab donors it was unacceptable that Israel continued to hold back sufficient aid flows.

Call for swift action

Qatar on Friday urged swift international action to stop violence in the Gaza Strip with its Foreign Ministry, saying in a statement that it stresses that continued bombing at the end of the pause "complicates mediation efforts and exacerbates the humanitarian catastrophe in the strip, and... calls on the international community to move quickly to stop the violence."

It added, "Condemnation of all forms of targeting civilians, the practice of collective punishment, and attempts to forcibly displace citizens of the besieged Gaza Strip, and its demand for an immediate cease-fire."

Qatar has been engaged in intense negotiations to repeatedly prolong a truce in Gaza that had lasted a total of seven days after two extensions.

IAEA calls for revival of nuclear talks

International Desk

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog has urged world powers to relaunch talks with Iran to break a stalemate over the country's nuclear program. "There needs to be some re-creation of a system of dialogue with Iran," Rafael Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said after he expressed concern about Iran's stockpiling of enriched uranium. Grossi said talks with Iran might require a new framework, rather than an attempt to revive

the 2015 accord — known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — that has floundered since the US abandoned it in 2018 under former president Donald Trump.

"Trying to put [a nuclear deal] back into the JCPOA box wouldn't work," Grossi said. "You can still call it a JCPOA, but it should be a JCPOA 2.0 or something because you have to adapt."

He also said the situation surrounding Iran's nuclear program was "very uncertain" and urged nations to "sit down and re-engage."

The talks to revive the 2015 deal kicked

off in Vienna in April 2021, with the intention of removing anti-Iran sanctions and examining Washington's seriousness in rejoining the JCPOA.

The discussions, however, have been at a standstill since August 2022 due to Washington's refusal to remove all the sanctions imposed by the previous US administration.

Iran said last year that it has begun producing enriched uranium at 60% purity at its Fordo nuclear plant. Iran says uranium enrichment to the purity level of 60% was in response to the lack of commitment by the European parties to the nuclear agreement.

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami announced in June that enriching uranium to the said purity level was in accordance with a December 2020 parliamentary law — the Strategic Action Plan to Counter Sanctions.

Iran, Oman stage joint naval drill in Strait of Hormuz

Iranian and Omani military forces staged a day-long joint naval rescue and relief exercise in the Hormuz Strait and the northern tip of the Indian Ocean as the two neighbors move to build stronger relations.

Combat vessels and airborne units of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy, the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), the Naval Division of the Border Police, the Ports and Maritime Organization of Iran, and the Royal Navy of Oman took part in the drills on Thursday. The naval exercise was held in the presence of the heads of the joint military friendship commissions of the two countries.

The main goals of the naval drills were described as boosting combat readiness, and implementing

bilateral agreements on maritime security. Iranian drones carried out observation and monitoring operations in the northern parts of the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Hormuz, and the country's reconnaissance aircraft made several sorties to survey all military and merchant vessels cruising in the vicinity of the area at the time.

Iranian and Omani military forces managed to successfully implement various scenarios during the joint drill, showcasing their coordination. In recent years, Iran has staged many naval drills with countries, including Oman, Pakistan and Russia in order to test the combat preparedness of its Navy which has increased its presence in international waters.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on

Tuesday said, "In the first years after the [Islamic] Revolution, the presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy beyond territorial waters was unimaginable, but now the Navy makes a 360-degree voyage around the globe powerfully and returns to the country with pride." Meanwhile, Iranian Navy Commander Rear Admiral Shahram Irani on Friday praised the Navy's efforts and advances in recent years. The Iranian commander said that the country's Jamaran destroyer is now on a mission in the Gulf of Aden, and the Alborz destroyer is present in the Red Sea to secure the shipping lines. Today, the maritime economy is provided with high security by the country's naval forces, he said. On Monday, a new domestically-manufactured destroyer, dubbed Deylaman, joined Iran's northern naval fleet to strengthen security in the Caspian Sea. Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great progress in developing and manufacturing a broad range of military equipment, making the Armed Forces self-sufficient in this regard.



Smoke rises above buildings during an Israeli strike on Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on December 1, 2023.
SAID KHATIB/AFP