



Displaced Palestinians flee from Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on January 30, 2024, amid the ongoing Israel's strikes on the Palestinian territory.
● MAHMUD HAMS/AFP

UN warns Gaza faces humanitarian 'collapse'

Artillery fire pounded southern Gaza early Wednesday as Israel said it has begun flooding Hamas tunnels and mediators sought a halt to the nearly four-month Israel's aggression. The focus of the fighting in recent weeks has been Khan Yunis, the southern Gaza Strip's main city, where an AFP reported constant air strikes and shelling overnight. The health ministry recorded at least 125 deaths across the territory in the latest Israeli strikes.

UN agency chiefs said a bitter row over the main aid agency for Palestinians could "have catastrophic consequences for the people of Gaza". Major donors, including Israel's top ally the United States and Germany, have suspended funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, over ac-

cusations that several staff members were involved in the October 7 attack that sparked the war. Withholding the funds was "perilous and would result in the collapse of the humanitarian system in Gaza", the heads of the UN agencies said in a joint statement. Meanwhile mediation ef-

orts gathered pace following a Sunday meeting of top US, Israeli, Egyptian and Qatari officials that produced a proposed framework for a new truce and hostage release. A Hamas official told AFP that a delegation headed by the group's leader Ismail Haniyeh "will be in Cairo to discuss the proposal.

Following the deadliest attack in Israel's history, its military launched a withering air, land and sea offensive that has killed at least 26,900 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, according to the territory's health ministry. In Khan Yunis, where the Hamas government media office said there were

"dozens of air raids" overnight, vast areas have been reduced to a muddy wasteland of bombed-out buildings. According to witnesses, artillery shells hit the area of Nasser Hospital, the city's largest, where the UN humanitarian agency OCHA has said thousands of displaced Palestinians are

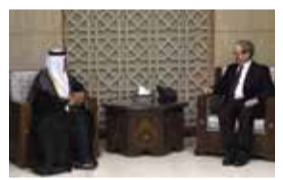
sheltering. The Palestinian Red Crescent said on social media platform X that "Israeli shelling and gunfire continue" around another hospital in Khan Yunis. Staff and patients at the Red Crescent's Al-Amal Hospital "and thousands of displaced people, primarily children and women, live in constant fear and anxiety", it said. The Israeli military said it had begun flooding the tunnels with water in a bid to "neutralize the threat of Hamas' subterranean network". An AFP journalist witnessed people fleeing Khan Yunis on Tuesday as explosions sounded nearby. "We left Nasser Hospital... under tank fire and air strikes. We didn't know where to go," said one woman. "We're out in the cold, left to fend for ourselves." Qatar, which helped broker a previous truce and hostage release in November, voiced hope an initial deal now being negotiated might lead to a permanent ceasefire. The Hamas official said the group is "open to discussing all issues, including prisoner exchange and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip", requesting anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks. The official reiterated Hamas's demand for "a comprehensive and complete cessation of (Israel's) aggression" and the withdrawal of its troops from Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose office earlier called the negotiations "constructive", ruled out releasing "thousands" of Palestinian prisoners as part of any deal.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran receiving 'perfect signals' from Mahda satellite

The Iranian deputy minister of communications technology said the Mahda satellite, successfully launched into orbit on Sunday, is in 'perfect health,' and the link is not disrupted. Hassan Salarieh, the head of the Iranian Space Organization (ISO), said on Wednesday the satellite, launched along with Keyhan 2 and Hatf 1 nano-satellites, is fulfilling the country's research objectives. He said, "Mahda is a telecommunications satellite that has a power supply and distribution subsystems. This satellite receives its power from solar energy," IFP reported. Simultaneously sending three indigenous satellites into outer space on Simorgh-1 satellite carrier for the first time marked a big stride for Iran.

UAE sends first ambassador to Syria in 13 years



The United Arab Emirates dispatched the country's first ambassador to Syria after 13 years, following the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two Arab countries. The Emirati envoy officially presented his credentials to Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal al-Mikdad at the Arab country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates in the capital Damascus on Tuesday. According to Syria's official SANA news agency, Hassan al-Shehi conveyed to the Syrian side his commitment to enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries during his meeting with Mikdad. He also pledged to work to strengthen cooperation and achieve mutual progress between the two Arab countries.

Yemeni forces target US destroyer in Red Sea with missiles

Yemen's Ansarallah movement fired "several" missiles at a US warship in the Red Sea, they said on Wednesday, hours after the US military reported shooting down a missile. Brigadier General Yahya Saree said in a televised speech broadcast live from the Yemeni capital Sana'a on Wednesday that the Yemeni forces had carried out an operation against the USS Gridley destroyer.

He noted that the missile attack came in support of the oppressed Palestinians and resistance fighters in the Gaza Strip and in response to joint American-British aggression against Yemen. Saree underscored that all US and British warships in the Red Sea and the Arab Sea, which are participating in the ongoing aggression against the Arab nation, have become legitimate targets for Yemenis within

the fundamental and inalienable right to defend their homeland and nation, and in reaffirmation of their staunch support of Palestine. The senior Yemeni military figure also emphasized that his country's military will continue its anti-Israel operations until the Tel Aviv regime halts its onslaught against Gaza and eases restrictions on supplies of humanitarian aid for its Palestinian population.

Yemenis have declared their open support for Palestine's struggle against the Israeli occupation since the regime launched a devastating war on Gaza on October 7 after the territory's Palestinian resistance movements carried out a surprise retaliatory attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, against the occupying entity. The attacks have prompted some shipping companies to detour around southern

Africa to avoid the Red Sea, a vital route that normally carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade. Container shipping through the Red Sea has dropped by nearly one-third this year as attacks by Yemen on Israel-bound ships continue, the International Monetary Fund said Wednesday. "Container shipping... has declined by almost 30 percent," said Jihad Azour, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia

department, adding that "the drop in trade accelerated in the beginning of this year." The IMF's PortWatch platform indicates that the total transit volume - including not only containers - through the Suez Canal was down 37 percent this year through January 16 compared to the same period a year earlier. The canal connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran warns of ...

Meanwhile, the chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps warned that Iran "will not leave any threat unanswered". "Sometimes, the enemies make threats. And these days, too, we hear some threats in the US officials' rhetoric," Major General Hossein Salami said on Wednesday. "We tell them (the Americans) that you have tested us and we know each other. We will not leave any threat unanswered." The IRGC chief stressed that, "We are not seeking

war, yet are not afraid of it either." Tensions have soared in the region since the October 7 attacks by Hamas against Israel, with US forces in Iraq and Syria coming under attack 165 times by the resistance groups in the intervening months. The resistance groups say the attacks are in retaliation for the US support for Israel in the brutal Gaza war, which has killed at least 26,900 Palestinians, mostly women and children, and injured 65,949 others over nearly four months. An Iraqi resistance group

said it has suspended operations against US forces. Kataib Hezbollah said this was "to prevent embarrassment of the Iraqi government". The US Defense Department said, "Actions speak louder than words." Kataib Hezbollah Secretary-General Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi said in a statement on Tuesday: "As we announce the suspension of military and security operations against the occupation forces - in order to prevent embarrassment of the Iraqi government - we will continue to defend our people in Gaza

in other ways." Lebanon's Hezbollah movement has also launched many attacks on Israeli targets inside the occupied territories in support of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The United States and Britain have also launched a campaign of air strikes against Yemen which has carried out repeated attacks on Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea in solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Yemen's Ansarallah movement also says the attacks on the ships are in support of the Palestinians.