

EU to launch programme to aid Palestinians facing settler violence

● Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis live in the occupied West Bank

AFP | Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

The European Union will soon launch a programme to support Palestinians facing Israeli settler violence in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Authority and the EU office in Jerusalem said Monday.

"In coordination with the government, the European Union will launch a programme to support victims of settler terrorism," Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Mustafa said in a statement.

"It's a project that the EU is developing with local and international NGOs with the aim of documenting attacks on Palestinians by violent Israeli settlers and to support the communities that are victims of such attacks," the office of the EU representative in the Palestinian Territories told AFP.



Palestinians inspect the debris of a demolished house that was built without a permit, in the village of al-Dirat near Yatta town in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron

A source at the office added that the project, led by civil society organisations and supported by the EU, "will provide protective presence and protective equipment such as fences to Palestinian communities facing attacks from settlers".

The programme is expected to be finalised within a few months, and its budget should be "around six million euros", the source added.

Settler violence has long been an issue, and has only increased as settlements expand in the West Bank.

Rural communities are most vulnerable due to their isolation, with beatings, damaged crops, cattle theft and arson reported almost daily.

There has been a spike in deadly attacks by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank since the start of the Iran war on February 28, Palestinian officials and the United Nations have said. Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis live in the occupied West Bank in settlements that are illegal under international law, among some three million Palestinians.

Russia declares May 9 truce, threatens attack if Ukraine breaks it

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia yesterday declared a unilateral ceasefire with Ukraine between May 8-9, when Moscow marks its annual World War II Victory Day commemorations, and threatened a "massive missile strike" on Kyiv if Ukraine violated it.

Russian President Vladimir Putin first proposed the truce last week, during a phone call with US counterpart Donald Trump.

Ukraine said last week it would seek details from Washington about the offer.

"In accordance with a decision of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armed Forces, Vladimir

Putin, a ceasefire has been declared from May 8-9, 2026 ... We hope that the Ukrainian side will follow suit," the Russian defence ministry said in a post on state-backed messaging app MAX.

"If the Kyiv regime attempts to implement its criminal plans to disrupt the celebration of the 81st anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the Russian Armed Forces will launch a retaliatory, massive missile strike on the center of Kyiv."

"We warn the civilian population of Kyiv and employees of foreign diplomatic missions of the need to leave the city promptly," it added.

Mother convicted for locking up daughter in Germany

AFP | Berlin, Germany

A German woman convicted of keeping her young daughter locked up at home for years was sentenced to five years in prison yesterday.

The woman, who had kept her daughter confined to the home of the girl's grandparents, was found guilty of kidnapping, abduction of a minor and mistreatment of a vulnerable person, according to a court spokeswoman.

The grandmother was given a two-year suspended sentence for the same charges, while the grandfather also received a suspended sentence as an accomplice.

The girl, who is now 11 years old, was kept locked up for about seven years in the town of Attendorn in the Sauerland region of western Germany

before being freed in September 2022.

The girl received neither schooling nor medical care during that time, according to prosecutors, who said the girl suffered severe developmental problems as a result of the isolation.

According to the indictment, the mother fabricated a story claiming she had moved to Italy with her daughter, and severed all contact with the child's father.

The grandparents allegedly helped by running errands and spreading the false claims that the child was in Italy.

"The girl's family was part of the community," a resident of Attendorn told public broadcaster ARD, adding that it was "incredible that no one noticed".

What is hantavirus, and can it spread between humans?

AFP | Paris, France

Three people have died after a suspected outbreak of hantavirus on board a cruise ship sailing between Argentina and Cape Verde.

So far, one case of the potentially deadly virus has been confirmed, according to the World Health Organization, which stressed that the risk to the public remains low.

However, the suspected outbreak has raised questions over whether the virus, which is normally spread by contact with rodents, is being transmitted between humans.

Virginie Sauvage, the head of France's National Reference Centre for Hantaviruses, told AFP in an interview that identifying the specific strain will provide crucial insight into what happened on the ship.

How common are hantaviruses?

These viruses are found all over the world, with infections occurring year-round. For example, China, Russia and South Korea report several thousand cases a year.

In the Americas, Finland and

France, there are several hundred cases annually.

Only certain strains of hantaviruses found exclusively in rodents -- rats, mice, and voles -- are transmitted to humans.

How dangerous are they?

Hantaviruses are split into two groups: viruses from the old world (Europe, Asia, Africa) and those from the new world (North, Central and South America).

For old world viruses, the mortality rate can be as high as 14 percent. However, in developed nations such as France, fatal cases are extremely rare and mainly affect people with pre-existing health conditions.

Some cases are asymptomatic or limited to body aches, an upset stomach and a mild cough. But rare cases can include kidney problems that can develop into acute but reversible renal failure.

In contrast, the lethality of new world viruses can exceed 40 percent. These cases can rapidly spread to lungs, leading to breathing issues or sometimes heart problems.

What is the treatment?

The faster

people receive treatment, the better their prognosis.

Because there is no specific treatment for hantavirus, instead doctors aim to manage the symptoms.

If the virus severely affects the lungs, oxygen therapy in an intensive care unit may be necessary.

People who work in particular industries, such as forestry or farming, are particularly at risk.

Like any infection, the most at risk are the elderly, those with weaker immune systems, and people with pre-existing health problems.

Is it contagious?

It is still unknown whether this was an outbreak of the Andes virus. This is the only strain for which there are confirmed cases of human-to-human transmission, but this required close and prolonged contact -- for example, within a family.

Humans are mainly infected by inhaling aerosols contaminated by the saliva, droppings or urine of animals or through direct contact with faeces, or

via bites or scratches.

For the cruise ship, there are two possible scenarios: human-to-human transmission or isolated infections before people boarded, for example if they took a trip together.

What could sequencing reveal?

Sequencing the virus from an infected passenger on the ship will identify what strain of hantavirus is involved.

Because the ship left from Ushuaia in southern Argentina, the Andes virus is suspected because it circulates there.

However, if it is a different new world strain, for example one called Sin Nombre, which only circulates in North America, contamination in South America can be ruled out.

If a new world hantavirus is being transmitted between humans on this ship, that would be unprecedented, to my knowledge.



Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome often begins with flu-like symptoms—fever, fatigue, and muscle aches—but can rapidly progress within days to severe breathing problems as fluid builds up in the lungs.

A general view of the cruise ship MV Hondius stationary off the port of Praia, the capital of Cape Verde