

News in brief

President Volodymyr

Zelensky cast doubt Wednesday on NATO's ability to guarantee Ukraine's security but praised Donald Trump after the US president unexpectedly flip-flopped to say he thinks Russia can be defeated. Addressing the United Nations, Zelensky suggested that even NATO membership -- which Trump has ruled out for Ukraine -- might not be enough. "Because international institutions are too weak, this madness continues. Even being part of the long-standing military alliance doesn't automatically mean you are safe," he told the UN General Assembly. But Zelensky praised Trump after their meeting Tuesday. "We had a good meeting with President Trump, and I also spoke with many other strong leaders, and together, we can change a lot," he said. "Of course we are doing everything to make sure Europe truly helps and of course, we count on the United States."



Zelensky says NATO membership not automatic protection, praises Trump after shift

Canada bank staffer accused of unauthorized viewing of PM Carney's accounts

An employee of Canada's largest bank accused of viewing Prime Minister Mark Carney's personal accounts without approval has been charged with fraud, federal police told AFP yesterday. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said the 23-year-old suspect from Ottawa was also charged with unauthorized use of a computer and identity theft, among other offenses, after the Royal Bank of Canada raised alarm about suspicious conduct. The suspect "allegedly consulted the personal data of Prime Minister Mark Carney," RCMP spokesperson Eriq Gasse said in an email. The investigation so far does not point toward a risk to national security or to Carney's personal safety, Gasse said. RBC spokesperson Cheryl Brean told AFP that the bank "took immediate action" once the suspicious conduct was identified and "the individual... is no longer employed at the bank."

Israel's military said a drone launched from Yemen struck the southern town of Eilat yesterday, with rescuers reporting five wounded including two in serious condition. A military statement said the drone "fell in the area of Eilat" on the Red Sea coast after air defences had failed to intercept it. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which occurred on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels have claimed similar attacks throughout the Gaza war since late 2023. Israel's Magen David Adom emergency medical service said its teams had treated five casualties with shrapnel wound, including two men who were in serious condition. Police said the drone fell in Eilat's city centre, causing damage in the area frequented by tourists.

Yemen drone attack wounds five in Israeli resort town: army, rescuers



SPOTLIGHT



UN demands probe, Italy deploys frigate after drone 'attack' on Gaza aid flotilla

AFP | Rome, Italy

The United Nations called yesterday for an investigation into alleged drone attacks against a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, as Brussels slammed the strikes as unacceptable and Italy sent a navy frigate to assist. The Global Sumud Flotilla blamed Israel for the more than a dozen explosions heard around the flotilla late Tuesday off Greece, with damage caused by "unidentified objects" dropped on deck. "Israel escalates dangerous attacks", including "the deployment of explosive and incendiary devices, deliberate dispersal of chemical substances onto civilian vessels" and attempts to render the boats unseaworthy, it said. UN Human Rights Office spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan said anyone re-

sponsible for the "violations" should be held accountable. The Global Sumud Flotilla (GSF) set sail from Barcelona this month with the aim of breaking the Israeli blockade of Gaza and delivering humanitarian aid. Israel, which blocked two previous attempts by activists to reach Gaza by sea in June and July, has said it will not allow the flotilla to reach the embattled Palestinian territory. "Israel will not allow vessels to enter an active combat zone and will not allow any breach of the lawful naval blockade," foreign ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein told AFP. "If their intentions are sincere, they should transfer any such aid to the nearby Ashkelon Marina so it can be forwarded promptly to the Gaza Strip in a non-violent manner," he said.

'The time has come'

France recognises Palestinian state, urges end to Gaza war

United Nations, New York

French President Emmanuel Macron declared on Tuesday that France recognises the State of Palestine, calling for an immediate end to the war in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas. "We are here because the time has come. The time has come for release of the 48 hostages held by Hamas. The time has come to stop the war, the bombardment of Gaza, the massacres and the flight of civilians," Macron told world leaders at the UN General Assembly. "One thing is certain: we can no longer wait." The announcement places France among the most prominent Western nations to formally endorse Palestinian statehood, joining Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and others who took similar steps in recent years.

Historical responsibility

Macron reminded delegates of the 1947 UN decision to partition Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Israel's independence was secured, he said, but "the promise of an Arab state remains unfulfilled to this day." "For decades, Israelis and Palestinians have travelled down a long road of hope mixed with despair," he said. "We bear collective responsibility for failing to build a just and lasting peace in the Middle East thus far."

The shock of October 7

The French leader recalled the 7 October 2023 Hamas attacks, which killed 1,224 people in Israel, wounded nearly 5,000 and led to 251 hostages being taken into Gaza. "The barbarity of Hamas stunned Israel and the world," he said. "For the Israeli soul and the world's conscience, 7 October is a wound that is still raw. We unequivocally condemn it because nothing, ever, anywhere can justify the use of terrorism." France, he added, has not forgotten the 51 French citizens killed in the assault, honouring them at a national ceremony. "We will not forget them. Ever. Just as we will never end the existential fight against anti-Semitism."

Equal value of lives

While standing with Israel against terrorism, Macron insisted the ongoing war in Gaza cannot continue. "Nothing, nothing justifies continuing the war in Gaza any longer," he declared. "To save lives -- the lives of Israeli hostages... and the lives of Palestinian civilians wracked by hunger and grief. All lives are equally valuable." He cited his encounters with both Israeli hostage families and Palestinian victims. "The duty that we all have is to protect one another -- a duty that is indivisible, just like our humanity." Recognition of Palestine Macron framed France's recognition of Palestinian statehood as an overdue step to keep



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There is a solution that can break the cycle of war and destruction. It is by recognizing one another -- every person's legitimacy, humanity and dignity. Let those on both sides open their eyes again and see human faces instead of the enemy's mask or a target drawn over them by the war. It's the recognition that Israelis and Palestinians live in a parallel solitude -- the solitude of the Israelis following the historic nightmare of 7 October 2023, and the solitude of the Palestinians, who are completely exhausted by this endless war.

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON

alive the two-state solution.

"This recognition is a way of affirming that the Palestinian people are not a people too many," he said. "The recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people does not subtract in any way from the rights of the Israeli people. Indeed, we are convinced that this recognition is the only solution that will bring peace to Israel." He stressed the move was not a victory for Hamas but a blow against extremism: "This recognition of the State of Palestine is a defeat for Hamas and for all those who incite anti-Semitic hatred."

International momentum

France's move was coordinated with several partners, Macron revealed. "Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, San Marino and the United Kingdom" would also announce recognition, he said, following the path taken by Ireland, Norway, Slovenia and

Spain in 2024.

"This follows the choice made by many others before. It reflects a common ambition to break the cycle of violence and to change the situation on the ground."

A plan for peace

The French president outlined a three-phase plan, developed with Saudi Arabia and backed by a UN resolution adopted by a wide majority.

1. Immediate ceasefire and hostage release -- pairing the liberation of the remaining 48 hostages with a halt to Israeli military operations. Macron credited Qatar, Egypt and the United States for their mediation and urged Israel not to obstruct progress.

2. Stabilisation and reconstruction of Gaza -- a transitional administration involving the Palestinian Authority, young Palestinian leaders and security forces, supported by international partners. France and the EU, he said, stood ready

to help train and equip Palestinian security services, while an international mission could assist in stabilisation.

3. Renewed Palestinian governance and negotiations -- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has pledged reforms, disarmament of Hamas, rejection of hate speech and preparation for elections. Macron said France would monitor progress and could open an embassy in Palestine once a ceasefire is in place and all hostages are freed.

France would also condition cooperation with Israel on its willingness to end the war and negotiate. "This will be the path that will lead us to a sovereign, independent and demilitarized State of Palestine that brings together all of its territories, recognizes Israel, and is recognized by Israel," Macron said.

Regional appeal

Macron urged Arab and Muslim states to recognise Israel once Palestine becomes sovereign, creating "mutual recognition which will further peace and security of all in the Middle East."

He argued that Israeli-Palestinian peace could serve as "the first pillar of a new peace and security architecture in the Middle East" and pave the way for deeper regional economic integration.

Call to Israel

The French president acknowledged Israeli fears and scepticism but called on its leaders to seize the moment.

"I understand their reservations and their fears. I am listening to the Israeli people with great respect and have heard their sorrow and fatigue," he said. "I want to believe that the Israeli authorities will also listen and, in turn, commit themselves."

Macron invoked the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime minister assassinated nearly 30 years ago for pursuing peace. Quoting Rabin, he said: "I waged war as long as there was no chance for peace."

"This chance exists today," Macron insisted. "A total of 142 States are proposing this peace with their hands held out, ready to be shaken."

"The time has come"

He concluded with the same refrain that opened his address: "Yes, the time has come to stop the war in Gaza, the massacres, the death, immediately. The time has come for Israel to live in peace and security... The time has come to deliver justice to the Palestinian people and thereby recognize a State of Palestine, a brother and neighbour, in Gaza and the West Bank, by way of Jerusalem. The time has come to drive the hideous face of terrorism from these lands and build peace. Peace is much more demanding, much more difficult than any war. But the time has come."

The time has come. That is why, true to my country's historic commitment in the Middle East, for peace between the Israeli people and the Palestinian people, I declare that France today recognizes the State of Palestine.