

12 Killed in Blast at Turkey Explosives Plant

ISTANBUL (AFP) – A powerful blast on Tuesday ripped through an explosives plant in northwest Turkey killing 12 people and injuring four others, officials said. Footage showed shards of glass and metal scattered outside the plant, where ambulances stood by. "According to initial reports, 12 employees died and four were taken to hospital with injuries as a result of the explosion," local governor Ismail Ustaoglu said. "I wish God's mercy upon our deceased citizens and a speedy recovery to our wounded," he added. Officials said the wounded were not in a serious condition. The blast took place at 8:25 am (0525 GMT) at a section of the plant which local officials said collapsed by the force of the explosion. Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the cause was not immediately known and authorities ruled out sabotage.

If the right usurped from us is given back to us we shall take it, otherwise we shall go on claiming it.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Bethlehem, Beirut Mark Somber Christmas Under Shadow of War

BETHLEHEM (Dispatches) – Hundreds of people gathered at the Church of the Nativity in the holy city of Bethlehem on Tuesday to mark another solemn Christmas overshadowed by the war in Gaza.

Missing for a second consecutive year were the festive decorations, and the crowd paled in comparison to the throngs of tourists and pilgrims of Christmases past -- a reflection of the somber mood as the war by the Zionist regime against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip drags on.

At Manger Square, the heart of the Palestinian city dominated by the revered church that marks the site where Christians believe Jesus Christ was born, a group of scouts held a small parade that broke the morning's silence.

"Our children want to play and laugh," read a sign carried by one of them, as his friends whistled and cheered.

The Zionist regime's aggression on Gaza, the deadliest in the occupying regime's history, resulted in the deaths of 1,208 people, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures.

Meanwhile, cutting through the uncharacteristic darkness and silence, faint Christmas music drifts through the center of Beirut's suburb of Hadath.

The town is still reeling from the Zionist regime's two-month war on Lebanon. Local scouts,



Latin Patriarch of Al-Quds Pierbattista Pizzaballa leads a Christmas procession outside the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem

attempting to bring as much holiday cheer as they can, organized a small Christmas party in a vocational center.

Children had their faces painted, teenagers distributed food and young boys competed on a punching machine.

Dania Sabbagh, the centre's owner, told Middle East Eye that they hosted this event "because there are no decorations and no life at all".

"I work here, and usually there are parades and [other festivities]," she said.

This year, decorations are nearly non-existent, and just a few meters away from the scouts' party, the only sounds present are the occasional ringing of church bells in the rain.

Christian-majority Hadath

is located next to Beirut's southern suburbs, colloquially known as Dahiyeh, which were subjected to heavy bombing by the Zionist regime during the war.

"We were kind of a disaster area with no one here," Viviane Karam, a giftshop owner in the town who specializes in preparing presents for major occasions, told MEE.

The Zionist regime's war on Lebanon began as border clashes on 8 October 2023, a day after the war on Gaza started.

The conflict escalated significantly when the Zionist regime launched a widespread bombing campaign and a ground invasion of Lebanon in September that eventually calmed

down after a ceasefire agreement was signed in November.

Over 4,000 people were killed in Lebanon, with at least 84 percent of the fatalities occurring since September.

Hadath also suffered some damage from strikes. Glass shattered in homes and churches, while other buildings sustained more severe damage.

"Lots of families lost their homes, or at least the glass," said Karam.

Many of Hadath's residents, including Karam, temporarily left their homes for safer areas during the war.

Hoping the ceasefire would help her recover from the war's financial woes, Karam saw little business return to the war-torn area.

"There is not much work," she said as she was preparing some gift boxes. "Usually, in these times, we would be preparing [gifts] for engagements, baptisms, etc. Now, there are no occasions except for child-births."

Hadath's mayor, George Aoun, told MEE that the municipality had not organized any holiday activities this year but would support any individual initiatives.

"The mayor was not focused on decorations. I think he was focusing more on supporting the families that were most affected [by the war]," Karam said.

Israel Publicly Admits Assassinating Ex-Hamas Leader Haniyeh



Iranians attend the funeral procession of Hamas' political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on August 1, 2024.

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime has admitted publicly for the first time that it assassinated Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital of Tehran.

War minister Israel Katz made the comments as part of his threats that the Zionist regime planned to escalate its conflict with the Ansarullah in Yemen.

"Just as we did to [Ismail] Haniyeh, [Yahya] Sinwar, and [Sayyed Hassan] Nasrallah in Tehran, Gaza, and Lebanon," Katz alleged, referring to the former Hamas Political Bureau chief, his successor, and the former secretary general of Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement, the regime would "damage the strategic infrastructure, and behead the leaders" of whatever party that takes aim at it.

Haniyeh was assassinated back in July after the regime carried out a targeted killing operation against the Iranian capital Tehran, to which he had travelled as an official guest to attend the inauguration ceremony of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

The regime assassinated Haniyeh's successor, Sinwar, in another attack against the Gaza Strip in October, and staged a targeted killing strike against Beirut in September that resulted in the assassination of Nasrallah.

Katz threatened that the regime would

carry out the atrocities that he had mentioned in Yemen's capital Sana'a and western port city of al-Hudaydah.

The resistance groups and their fellow movements across the region have, however, vowed that they would always emerge stronger and more capable from the regime's attacks, and would not be affected by any hostile measures, including assassination of their leaders.

The Israeli official, however, went on to say, "We have dealt a severe blow" to the regional Axis of Resistance, "and we will also deal a severe blow" to Yemen's popular resistance Ansarullah movement, "which remains the last to stand and fire at Israel."

Yemen's Armed Forces have been conducting numerous pro-Palestinian strikes since October 7, 2023, when the Zionist regime began taking the Gaza Strip under a United States-backed genocidal war that has so far claimed the lives of more than 45,200 Palestinians, mostly women and children.

The strikes have been targeting the American military assets that are deployed off Yemen's coastline, strategic and sensitive targets across the occupied Palestinian territories as well as the Israeli ships and the vessels heading towards the territories.

Report: Germany Allows More Arms Exports to Israel

BERLIN (Dispatches) – Germany approved further arms exports to the Zionist regime worth more than €30 million (\$31.2 million) over the past few weeks, German newsweekly Der Spiegel reported Tuesday.

Overall, Germany gave green light to weapon exports to the occupying regime worth more than €160 million over the course of the year, despite growing international criticism of what human rights groups label genocidal actions in the Gaza Strip.

According to Der Spiegel, the

latest arms export figures were released by the Ministry of Economics following an inquiry.

The German government has fulfilled many of the occupying regime's arms requests.

Based on Der Spiegel's reporting, the regime in Tel Aviv made a specific request for weapons of war shortly after the Hamas attack in October 2023.

The German deliveries include transmissions for the Israeli Merkava tanks are made in Germany after Berlin's approval of the deliveries in the summer.

The delivery of weapons

which can be used in Gaza was halted in March after Nicaragua brought a case against Germany before the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing it of aiding "genocide" in Gaza.

Germany has long been a key ally of the Zionist regime, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz often emphasizing Germany's special responsibility for the regime's "security" because of the country's Nazi past.

Critics argue, however, that Germany's unwavering support for Zionist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet is

damaging its international credibility and further isolating Berlin on the global stage.

Since the occupying regime began its military campaign against Hamas in Gaza last October, more than 45,300 people, most of them women and children have been killed, and over 105,000 wounded.

The regime is facing a genocide case at the ICJ for its actions in Gaza, where millions of Palestinians remain displaced and face severe shortages of food, medical supplies and other essentials.

Warning of Daesh Threat

Iraq's PMU Masses Resistance Forces on Border With Syria

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – Iraqi anti-terror Popular Mobilization Units, better known by the Arabic word Hashd al-Sha'abi, have sent fighters and military hardware to the country's long border with Syria, in a bid to ease concerns following the downfall of Bashar al-Assad's government by militant groups earlier this month.

The media bureau of Hashd al-Sha'abi announced in a statement that the forces were sent to reinforce the frontier as part of the Nineveh Sector Operations, and amid bad weather conditions and a severe cold snap in the region.

It emphasized that such measures fall within efforts to secure the Iraqi-Syrian border, and

could be described as precautionary steps aimed at thwarting any hostile attempt to undermine Iraq's national security and stability.

Iraqi officials are expressing concern about the potential movement of Daesh fighters into Iraq, as tensions rise in Syria's al-Hol Camp.

Located in Hasakah province in northeastern Syria, the camp houses around 40,000 individuals from 42 different nationalities, predominantly families and relatives of Daesh terrorists.

Hashd al-Sh'abai (PMU) fighters played a major role in the liberation of Daesh-held areas in the country.

Back in November 2016, the Iraqi parliament

approved a law giving full legal status to the PMU fighters. It recognized the PMU as part of the national armed forces, placed the forces under the command of the prime minister, and granted them the right to receive salaries and pensions like the regular army and police forces.

Militants, led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group, launched a surprise two-pronged attack on Syria's northwestern city of Aleppo and the countryside around Idlib on November 27. They marched southward to seize control of several major cities, including Hama, Homs, Dara'a, and Suwayda, before entering and capturing the capital Damascus early on December 8.

Students Sue University of Michigan Over Pro-Palestinian Protest Crackdown

MICHIGAN (Dispatches) – Current and former students at the University of Michigan have filed a lawsuit against the school alleging it disproportionately disciplined pro-Palestinian protesters and violated their free speech rights.

The federal lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court in Detroit. The plaintiffs allege that the school violated the students' constitutional rights to free speech, due process and equal protection under the law.

The six current and former students also allege that the University of Michigan initiated discipline proceedings against the students for speech-related conduct that other groups weren't punished for.

The plaintiffs also alleged that students were targeted with different degrees of disciplinary proceedings based on race. They also allege they were fired from campus jobs and blacklisted for future employment.

"The egregious Constitutional violations outlined in this suit are merely a fraction of the repression the University of Michigan has subjected student activists like us to because of our assertion that the University should not financially invest in, and materially benefit from, the genocide of the Palestinian people," graduate student and plaintiff Nora Hilgart-Griff told the Detroit News.

"That the University has departed

from its longstanding allowance of student protest—even protest that may be critical of University policies or leadership—for this issue alone is evidence of the way the Palestinian people are systematically and intentionally dehumanized by the countries who fund and enable their dispossession and deaths."

Campus protests against Israel erupted after it launched a devastating genocidal campaign on the Gaza Strip on October 7. Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have said Israel is committing genocide in Gaza.

The campus protests were widespread during the 2023 school year, and have continued this year. Rights groups say there has been a crackdown on free speech by universities and the U.S. government.

The University of Michigan lawsuit is the latest component of the campus protest movement, with current and former students alleging that their schools' behavior violated constitutional rights, and potentially hindered their post-graduate career courses.

In September 2024, Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Maryland sued their school to hold an interfaith vigil on October 7 to mourn those killed in Gaza. A federal judge ruled that the school could not block the event.