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Gaza Toll Tops 69,000 Martyrs Amid Ceasefire Exchanges

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip (Dispatches) — Gaza health officials reported that over 69,000 Palestinians have died in the Israeli genocide, as both sides completed the latest body exchange under the fragile ceasefire.

The rise in deaths reflects bodies recovered from rubble since the Oct. 10 truce and the identification of previously unrecognized victims. Some deaths occurred due to ongoing Israeli strikes. Israel returned 15 Palestinian remains to Gaza on Saturday, following the return of a captive to Israel.

Embassy U.S. 'Calculated Deception' Against Iran

TEHRAN – The Iranian Embassy in Japan on Saturday condemned U.S. President Donald Trump for admitting responsibility for Israel's war of aggression against Iran in June. In a statement posted on its official website, the Embassy said Trump's admission was shocking evidence of the fact that the U.S. 'diplomacy' is merely a 'calculated deception' to keep a hidden agenda of organized violence against Iran, including attacks on its peaceful nuclear sites. The Embassy added that those who hatched the deception plot continue to try to hide the truth and

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After Simorgh, Iran Starts Design of Light Passenger Planes

TEHRAN – **Iran's civil aviation regulator announced Saturday that the country's technical teams have entered the design phase of two light commercial passenger aircraft, after successfully building the indigenous cargo plane "Simorgh".**

Hussein Pourfazaneh, head of the Iranian Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), said that following the cargo aircraft project known as "Simorgh", Iran is now preparing for regional flights using locally-built aircraft designed to link smaller airports across the country.

He noted that under the Seventh Development Plan, one of the main industrial pillars is aviation propulsion systems — with the aviation sector singled out as a key growth industry. In this context, the regulator is advancing two main tracks: expanding air transport and building indigenous planes.

"As part of the air transport track, all four key pillars — the fleet, airports, support industries and human resources — must be developed," he said. He added that at the same time the government is placing emphasis on the domestic aircraft manufacturing sector as a strategic growth area.

Pourfazaneh reflected on prior domestic efforts, saying Iran's defense industry apparatus has for years worked on non-military aircraft, pointing to the "Iran-140" project as a notable example after Tehran halted cooperation with Ukraine's Antonov company and continued development domestically.

He said Iran now enjoys "top-tier" expertise in both military and civilian aerospace industries, which has culminated in the design and construction of the Simorgh transport plane.

Simorgh has completed factory testing and recently received its "Permit to Flight", he said. In the upcoming flight tests the aircraft's behavior and performance will be compared with simulation data to make any necessary design corrections. After that phase, the plane will move on to achieving its type certification and then to commercial production.

He added that a four-party memorandum of understanding has been signed between ICAO, the manufacturer, an airline operator and supporting agencies to ensure coordinated progress from design through production to operation.

Turning to the passenger aircraft program, Pourfazaneh said work has begun on designing two types of regional passenger planes.

"Because of the country's geographical expanse and the large number of small airports, we have a serious need for short-haul flights using 20-seat light aircraft, which can also enable international operations," he said.

He likened the national transport network to the human body: "If only the major arteries exist without the capillaries, the body's tissues will not grow properly."

By building these aircraft he said Tehran hopes to connect smaller cities into the broader network. The production phase will begin soon in cooperation with commercial partners, he said.

Iran's aviation industry is among its oldest sectors, he noted, dating back to 1937. He said that today, beyond experienced specialists, Iran has highly advanced technical, academic and industrial infrastructure.

"I have worked in the aviation industry for more than 31 years, and I believe Iran is capable of building indigenous aircraft — we just need a serious will and effective backing, and to remove obstacles for our specialists," he said.

The regulator's role, he said, is to remove barriers and support domestic talent so as to smooth the path for the aviation sector's development.

Hunger, Economic Turmoil Hit U.S. Capital Amid Shutdown

WASHINGTON (AP) — **With the combination of the longest government shutdown, the mass firings of government workers and a fresh cut in federal food aid, the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington is bracing for the swell of people who will need its help before the holiday season.**

The food bank, which serves 400 pantries and aid organizations in the District of Columbia, northern Virginia and two Maryland counties, is providing 8 million more meals than it had prepared to this budget year — a nearly 20% increase.

The city is being hit "especially hard," said Radha Muthiah, the group's CEO and president, "because of the sequence of events that has occurred over the course of this year."

The nation's capital has been battered by a series of decisions by the Trump administration, from the layoffs of federal workers to the ongoing law enforcement intervention into the district. The added blow of the shutdown, which has furloughed workers and paused money for food assistance, is only deepening the economic toll.

The latest figures from the D.C. Office of Revenue Analysis do not account for workforce changes since the shutdown that began Oct. 1. But even the September jobs report shows that the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate hovers at 6%, compared with the most recent national rate of 4.3%, and has been the highest in the nation for months.

The economic woes appear to be reverberating politically. Democrat Abigail Spanberger won election Tuesday as Virginia's governor after focusing her campaign message on the effects of President Donald Trump's actions on the state's economy.

The shutdown's long-term impact on the regional economy will be felt long after the government reopens, experts say.

Washington has the country's largest share of federal workers — about 20%, according to official figures — and roughly 150,000 federal employees call the area home. By Monday, hundreds of thousands of federal workers across the country will have missed at least two full paychecks because of the shutdown. Nationally, at least 670,000 federal employees are furloughed, while about 730,000 are working without pay, according to the Bipartisan Policy Center.

During the shutdown, the number of federal employees on Washington's transit system each weekday has dropped by about one-quarter compared with ridership in September. Eateries that the Restaurant Association of Greater Washington says were already dealing with thin margins from seasonal declines and the fallout from Trump's deployment of armed National Guard members on city streets are facing more challenges at a

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Incentives Fail to Stem Israel's Record Exodus

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Israel is grappling with an unprecedented wave of emigration even as the Zionist regime seeks to lure new immigrants and returning residents with generous financial incentives.

Extremist finance minister Bezalel Smotrich announced that new arrivals in 2026 will receive a two-year exemption from income tax, calling it a "Zionist and economic revolution" during a ceremony at the offices of Nefesh B'Nefesh, a regime-supported immigration group.

"It's worthwhile being a new immigrant," Smotrich said, framing the policy as a lure for professionals, investors, and entrepreneurs amid "rising antisemitism abroad and shifting tax policies in Western countries."

The measure, part of Israel's 2026 budget, allows new immigrants and returning residents who have lived abroad for at least a decade to pay no income tax in 2026 and 2027. Rates gradually increase to 10% in 2028, 20% in 2029, and 30% in 2030, up to an income ceiling of one million shekels ($305,000).

Zionist officials argue that these incentives, which expand existing benefits including a 10-year exemption on foreign income and other tax credits, will drive economic growth and ensure "optimal integration" for immigrants.

Yet, while the regime celebrates its "Zionist economic revolution," Israel is witnessing a demographic hemorrhage. Official data show a net loss of 145,900 residents between 2020 and 2024, with 49,000 leaving and only 12,100 returning in the first eight months of 2024 alone.

Knesset member Gilad Kariv last month described the exodus as "a tsunami" that threatens the illegal entity's social and economic resilience, blaming the Zionist regime for fracturing society and neglecting domestic stability even before the war in Gaza.

A striking feature of this migration is the profile of those leaving. Roughly 40% are aged 20 to 39, Israel's economic and technological backbone. Many are highly educated and affluent, concentrated in central cities and settlements, including Tel Aviv.

Between 2020 and 2024, more than 145,000 settlers abandoned occupied territories, a record in modern Israeli history. Analysts warn that the emigration of young professionals, entrepreneurs, and skilled laborers could exacerbate economic stagnation and destabilize the social fabric.

The surge in departures coincides with escalating political unrest. Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's return to power in late 2022, amid contentious judicial reforms and the eruption of the Gaza war, has intensified internal divisions.

In 2022, some 55,300 settlers left, a 46% increase from the previous year, followed by a 50% jump in 2023. The trend continued through 2024, reflecting growing disillusionment with Israel's leadership and direction.

The crisis is further compounded by a mass acquisition of foreign passports among settlers. A report by Hebrew-language daily Globes highlights that at least one in eight now holds a foreign passport, a measure that has evolved from status symbol to survival strategy.

This reflects both deep insecurity within settler society and a lack of faith in Israel's internal stability. International authorities are increasingly wary of naturalization applications from Israeli settlers, signaling awareness of the illegal entity's fragility on the global stage.

The social consequences are equally stark. Peace activists and left-leaning settlers, once able to operate within the political mainstream, now feel cornered. Mordechai, a 42-year-old activist, fled to Greece with his family after witnessing the shrinking of leftist political space post-October 7, 2023.

Noga, another activist, relocated to Milan, citing isolation and disillusionment. Many of Israel's brightest students are taking leave abroad with little intention of returning, eroding the intellectual and professional base of the illegal entity.

Emigration has not only escalated numerically but has also shifted in character. Whereas past departures were often temporary or limited to retirees, the current exodus affects the young, educated, and economically vital population.

According to Israeli statistics, 82,700 settlers left occupied territories in 2024 alone,

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