

WORLD

# Israeli forces launch fresh Gaza offensive

Window for peace remains narrow, say experts, as concern aired over rising toll

By LIU JIANQIAO  
liujianqiao@chinadaily.com.cn

The window for lasting peace in the Gaza Strip remains perilously narrow, experts warn, as Israel launched a large-scale military operation on Saturday, despite mediators' efforts for ceasefire talks. Israeli airstrikes killed at least 100 Palestinians across Gaza overnight, health authorities said on Sunday.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has expanded its strikes on the enclave, killing hundreds of people since Thursday. It has said the expansion is aimed at "achieving all the war's objectives", including release of hostages and "the defeat of Hamas".

The intensified assault comes as international concern has mounted over worsening humanitarian conditions in Gaza because of an Israeli aid blockade since March 2.

On Saturday, mediators Egypt and Qatar began a new round of indirect ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas, but sources close to the negotiations told Reuters there had been no breakthrough. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, addressing the 34th Arab League Summit in Iraq on Saturday, said he was "alarmed" at the escalation and called for a permanent ceasefire.

The summit's statement urged the international community "to exert pressure to end the bloodshed" and let in aid.

As the conflict shows no signs of abating and the humanitarian crisis grows ever more dire, experts said the prospect for lasting peace remains clouded by uncertainty.

Ding Jun, director of the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University, said Israel's decision to pursue a large-scale military campaign in Gaza alongside hostage negotiations reflects a calculated effort to navigate a complex domestic political landscape.

"On one hand, Israeli leaders face intense public pressure and mounting criticism over failed rescue attempts. To secure the release of hostages by any means necessary, and to date, negotiations have proved the only viable path," he said. "On the other, sustaining military

operations bolsters the government's 'wartime' legitimacy, reinforcing the narrative of national resolve."

The relentless operations of the Israeli military have left widespread infrastructure damage and deepened the humanitarian calamity in Gaza, he said.

"Ultimately, as the dominant actor in both conflict and diplomacy, whether a hostage-release deal or ceasefire deal can be achieved mainly depend on the political calculations of the Israeli authorities."

### Humanitarian crisis

Zhu Yongbiao, director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University in Gansu province, said Israel has long pursued a hard-line policy on the conflict, overlooking the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"Israel is a predominant force backed by the United States. If it refuses to take concrete measures to address conditions in Gaza, it risks further deepening the territory's humanitarian crisis," he said.

The Israeli blockade and continuing military campaigns have severely restricted — and in some areas completely halted — the delivery of food, water, fuel and medical supplies to Gaza. As the humanitarian crisis intensifies, the international community must urgently come together to expand relief efforts and alleviate civilian suffering, said Ding, from Shanghai International Studies University.

Both experts emphasized the two-state solution and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, urging countries to work within the UN framework and work with regional partners to pursue a peaceful and sustainable resolution.

"The military conflicts and humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip are untenable, and there is broad international consensus that an immediate ceasefire is essential to end the fighting and alleviate civilian suffering," Ding said.

"An obsession with force cannot deliver peace, and military occupation cannot secure lasting stability; only sustained political dialogue offers a viable path to resolving conflicts in Gaza."

Agencies contributed to this story.



Onlookers gather along the East River where a Mexican navy ship crashed into the Brooklyn Bridge in New York on Saturday. ZHANG ZHENGHAO / XINHUA

## Mexican ship strikes Brooklyn Bridge

NEW YORK — A Mexican navy sailing ship on a global goodwill tour struck the Brooklyn Bridge in New York on Saturday, snapping its three masts, killing two crew members and leaving some sailors dangling from harnesses high in the air waiting for help.

New York Mayor Eric Adams said the 142-year-old bridge was spared major damage but at least 19 people aboard the ship needed medical treatment.

Two of the four people who suffered serious injuries later died, Adams said on social media on Sunday.

The cause of the collision was under investigation.

In a scene captured in multiple eyewitness videos, the ship, called the *Cuauhtemoc*, could be seen traveling swiftly in reverse toward the bridge near the Brooklyn side of the East River. Then, its three masts struck the bridge's span and snapped, one by one, as the ship kept moving.

Videos showed heavy traffic on the span at the time of the 8:20 pm collision. No one on the bridge was reported injured.

The vessel, which was flying a giant Mexican flag and had 277 people aboard, then drifted into a pier on the riverbank as onlookers scrambled away.

Sailors could be seen aloft in the rigging on the damaged masts but, remarkably, no one fell into the water, officials said.

Sydney Neidell and Lily Katz told The Associated Press they were sitting outside to watch the sunset when they saw the vessel strike the bridge.

"We saw someone dangling, and I couldn't tell if it was just blurry or my eyes, and we were able to zoom in on our phone and there was someone dangling from the harness from the top for at least 15 minutes

before they were able to rescue them," Katz said.

Just before the collision, Nick Corso, 23, took his phone out to capture the backdrop of the ship and the bridge against the sunset. Instead, he heard what sounded like the loud snapping of a "big twig". Several more snaps followed.

People in his vicinity began running and "pandemonium" erupted aboard the ship, he said. He later saw a handful of people dangling from a mast.

"I didn't know what to think. I was like, is this a movie?" he said.

The Mexican navy said in a post on X that the *Cuauhtemoc* was an academy training vessel. It said a total of 22 people were injured, 19 of whom needed medical treatment.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum wrote on X that she was "deeply saddened" by the two crew members' deaths.

The Brooklyn Bridge, which

opened in 1883, has a nearly 490-meter main span supported by two masonry towers. More than 100,000 vehicles and an estimated 32,000 pedestrians cross every day, according to the city's transportation department.

Traffic was halted after the collision but was allowed to resume after an inspection, city officials said.

It was unclear what caused the ship to veer off course. Wilson Arambales, New York police chief of special operations, said the ship had just left a Manhattan pier and was supposed to have been headed out to sea, not toward the bridge.

He said an initial report was that the pilot of the ship had lost power because of a mechanical problem, though officials cautioned that information was preliminary. Videos show a tugboat was close to the *Cuauhtemoc* at the time of the crash.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

### Briefly

#### POLAND Voting underway for new president

Poles were voting on Sunday in a presidential election at a time of heightened security concerns stemming from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and growing worry that the United States' commitment to Europe's security could be weakening under President Donald Trump. The top two front-runners are Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski, a liberal allied with Prime Minister Donald Tusk, and Karol Nawrocki, a conservative historian with no prior political experience who is supported by the nationalist Law and Justice party. Recent opinion polls show Trzaskowski with about 30 percent support and Nawrocki in the mid-20s. A second round between the two is widely expected to take place on June 1.

#### JAPAN Support for Ishiba falls to record low

Support for Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has hit a record low, with nearly nine out of every 10 voters dissatisfied with the government's response to soaring price of rice, Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday. Support for Ishiba's government was at 27.4 percent, down from 32.6 percent a month ago, a Kyodo poll showed, boding ill for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party and junior coalition partner Komeito in an upper house election slated for July. The poll showed 87.1 percent of respondents found government measures addressing rising rice prices insufficient. Retail rice prices are about double what they were a year ago after extreme heat hit crops and a tourism boom added to demand, though the government in March started releasing stockpiled rice into the market.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

## China vows to back global health efforts

By ZHENG WANYIN in Geneva  
zhengwanyin@mail.chinadailyuk.com

The Chinese delegation to the 78th World Health Assembly, set to convene on Monday in Geneva, has vowed to promote international health cooperation and actively contribute to discussions on a wide range of priorities, including an agreement on pandemics.

The delegation, led by Lei Haichao, minister of China's National Health Commission, made the remarks on Saturday at a news conference, where they introduced their involvement in the gathering.

This year's assembly, themed "One World for Health", runs through May 27. It will address about 75 items and sub-items, covering topics, including health emergency preparedness and response, financing and budgeting, World Health Organization governance reform, and other pressing global health issues.

A key highlight will be the consideration of adopting the pandemic agreement — a document on how to better tackle future pandemics in a more well-organized and equitable manner — which WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus describes as "truly historic".

The final draft of the treaty was released last month following three years of talks among WHO member states. Notable elements include the rapid sharing of data about new diseases, the allocation of medical

resources to the WHO in the event of a future outbreak, and the transfer of health technologies to poorer nations, the BBC reported.

Speaking at the news conference, Xia Gang, deputy director of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, said China welcomes consensus among all parties on the draft agreement.

Xia said he believes the pact will help promote the equitable distribution of technology, funding and resources and support developing countries in strengthening their capacity to detect and respond to pandemics.

China has always been a staunch supporter and practitioner of multilateralism, as well as an active participant in global public health governance, he said, and China's constructive participation in the negotiations of the pandemic treaty is a prime example of this commitment.

Regarding Taiwan province's participation in this year's assembly, Chen Xu, permanent representative of China to the United Nations office in Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland, said the region's participation in events of international organizations, including the WHO, must follow the one-China principle, which is also a fundamental principle confirmed by UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly Resolution 25.1.

"There is no so-called gap in the

international anti-pandemic system, as hyped up by Democratic Progressive Party authorities of Taiwan province as well as a few countries," Chen said, pointing out that the Chinese central government has made proper arrangements for Taiwan province's participation in global health affairs under the one-China principle.

The central government has approved the participation in WHO technical activities by 11 batches of 12 health experts from Taiwan province over the past year, and there is an International Health Regulations Contact Point in Taiwan province for it to promptly access and report to the WHO on information related to health emergencies, Chen said.

"This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War, as well as the 80th anniversary of the recovery of Taiwan province," he said.

"Yet, at this critical juncture, the DPP as well as a few countries have attempted to reverse the course of history blatantly, again. They are essentially trying to challenge the postwar international order."

In addition to engaging in the main event, the Chinese delegation will host three side events during the assembly, focusing on the digital and intelligent empowerment of primary healthcare, traditional medicine, and mental health.



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A vibrant world  
stems from diverse nature

