

WORLD

Pessimism on early solution to Gaza strife

Both antagonists have little motivation for furious fighting to stop, expert says

By LIU XUAN
liuxuan@chinadaily.com.cn

Israeli warplanes struck several buildings and roads in a vital part of Gaza City early on Sunday, a day after destroying a high-rise building in Gaza that housed several international media.

Each year around May 15, called the day of Palestinian Catastrophe, there is conflict including exchanges of fire between Israel and Palestine. However, this year's confrontation seems to be worse than before, and it is possible it could last longer than normal, experts said.

Sunday's airstrikes on Gaza killed 40 Palestinians, raising the deaths to at least 188, Gaza's health ministry said.

Among the people killed were 47 children, it said. In Israel, 10 people have been killed, according to Agence France-Presse.

On Saturday, an Israeli airstrike pulverized a high-rise building that housed The Associated Press, the TV network Al Jazeera and other media after a warning had been issued that it was being targeted.

Despite international calls for a cease-fire and peace talks, the confrontation showed no sign of abating, but was in fact spreading to other parts of Israel.

Shu Meng, a researcher at the Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University, said an early end to the confrontation was unlikely.

"Israel lacks the sincerity to promote peace talks in the short term, since keeping the status quo means that Israel can continue to maintain its dominant position in the conflict, control parts of the West Bank and continue to expand Jewish settlements."

On the other side, Shu said, the brutal reality — a stagnant economy, the raging pandemic, and the difficulty of improving the state of partition — had made it more difficult for the Palestinians to speedily quell anger.

"In the foreseeable future, the two sides may not be able to negotiate in a peaceful way."

The conflict has simmered since the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in April and escalated sharply last Monday after Hamas set an ultimatum for Israel to withdraw its forces from the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, where hundreds of Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli police earlier that day.



Palestinians check remains of a building in Gaza after Israeli airstrikes on Saturday. XINHUA

Israel continued to pound Gaza with more airstrikes and artillery fire. However, Shu said, the risk of large-scale conflict is "relatively controllable" and a large-scale war will not develop.

"On the one hand, if the conflict continues to escalate, the international community will mediate and intervene. In addition, Palestine lacks the strength to continue to confront Israel, and Israel does not want the conflict to be prolonged."

Deep concern expressed

The United Nations Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, expressed deep concern over the continuing violence in the region, urging Israel to "exercise maximum restraint".

"Israeli authorities must exercise maximum restraint and respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly," he said.

Rocket attacks on Israel and airstrikes in Gaza will have "heavy consequences on the civilian population" in the whole region, said Fabrizio Carboni, regional director for the Near and Middle East at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"We remind all parties that all principles of the conduct of hostilities must be respected. Direct and indiscriminate attacks against civilians are prohibited by international humanitarian law, any attack must be proportionate, and all necessary precautions must be taken to avoid civilian casualties."

The UN Security Council was due to hold an open meeting on Sunday to discuss the conflict.

The meeting, proposed by Norway, Tunisia and China, was to have been held on Friday but was blocked by the United States on grounds of "ongoing diplomatic efforts".

The Washington Post said the US has "make little secret of its desire to avoid a deep entanglement" in the conflict, but analysts remain skeptical and said the country is "not a bystander".

"It is part and parcel of the asymmetry of power that unfairly hurts one side in favor of the other, while making peace more remote," said Shibley Telhami of the Brookings Institution.

Shu said the US has not fundamentally changed its position on the issue, with President Joe Biden saying to support a two-state solution.

Tail end of the race



A man participates in a traditional Pacu Jawi, or cow race, in Tanah Datar, West Sumatra, Indonesia, on Saturday. The Pacu Jawi is held annually in rice paddies to celebrate the end of the harvest season. ANDRI MARDIANSYAH / XINHUA

New warning on rapid melting of glaciers

By KARL WILSON in Sydney
karl.wilson@chinadailyapac.com

While a great deal of attention has been focused on the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, a new study has warned that the world's glaciers are melting faster and contributing more to rising sea levels.

Scientists say the loss is the equivalent of submerging the entire landmass of England under two meters of water every year.

Sue Cook, an Antarctic glaciologist with the University of Tasmania, Australia, told China Daily that glaciers in every region of the world have been thinning, generally at increasing rates.

"This mass loss makes an important contribution to global sea level rise. But I think it's also worth highlighting that the shrinking of glaciers presents other urgent risks."

About 2 billion people worldwide depend on meltwater from glaciers and snow packs for drinking water, irrigation, or power generation, she said.

"As glaciers shrink, this water supply will be placed under threat." Between 2000 and 2019 glaciers

lost 267 gigatons of ice a year, equivalent to 21 percent of sea-level rise, according to the study "Accelerated Global Glacier Mass Loss in the Early 21st Century", published in the science journal Nature.

The authors mapped the world's 271,175 glaciers using more than 500,000 satellite images from 2000 to 2019.

Estimates validated

They validated their estimates with available independent, high-precision measurements and calculated the volume and mass change of individual glaciers.

The study is the most comprehensive yet of how glaciers have changed this century, and that it "makes for disturbing reading", Cook said.

A special report titled "Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate" by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said recently that in some regions, glaciers could lose more than 80 percent of their current mass by 2100, with impacts on agriculture, local ecosystems, tourism, and socioeconomic development.

Studies like the one published in Nature are difficult to undertake

because glaciers are "often found in hard-to-reach places", Cook said.

"Although satellite records allow glaciologists to study broader areas, they often suffer from poor resolution and time coverage."

A comprehensive study like this one is "enormously valuable, because it allows us to take stock of how changing environments combine to make a big global impact".

Scientists say that as a cause of sea-level rise, glacier loss was second only to thermal expansion, which is prompted by higher ocean temperatures.

The lead author, Romain Hugonnet, of the University of Toulouse, France, said the data represents an urgent warning.

"A doubling of the thinning rates in 20 years for glaciers outside Greenland and Antarctica tells us we need to change the way we live. We need to act now. It can be difficult to get the public to understand why glaciers are important because they seem so remote, but they affect many things in the global water cycle including regional hydrology, and by changing too rapidly, can lead to the alteration or collapse of downstream ecosystems."

Briefly

UNITED STATES Pair wrongfully put on death row get \$75m

A jury in a North Carolina federal civil rights case on Friday awarded \$75 million to two black, intellectually disabled half brothers who spent decades behind bars after being wrongfully convicted of raping and murdering an 11-year-old girl in 1983. The pair, Henry McCollum and Leon Brown, have pursued the civil case against law enforcement members since 2015, arguing that their civil rights were violated during the interrogations that led to their convictions. The two were released from prison in 2014 after DNA evidence that pointed to a convicted murderer exonerated them.

EGYPT Dredging work on Suez to extend double lane

The Suez Canal Authority has started dredging work to extend a second lane that allows for two-way traffic in a southern section of the canal near where a giant container ship got stuck for six days in March, it said on Saturday. The authority announced last week that it planned to extend a second canal lane that opened in 2015 by 10 kilometers to make it 82 km long, and would widen and deepen a single lane stretch at the southern end of the canal. The grounding of the 440-meter container ship *Ever Given* in a southern section of the canal from March 23 to 29 delayed the passage of vessels, disrupting global trade.

SRI LANKA Four die in strong winds and heavy rains

At least four people had died and more than 42,000 others had been affected by days of strong winds and heavy rains that lashed the country because of the formation of a super cyclone in the Bay of Bengal, Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Center said on Saturday. More than 200 houses had been fully or partially damaged, and 175 people belonging to 42 affected families were housed in temporary shelters. The army had dispatched rescue teams in several districts affected by the floods and had rescued several trapped by rising water.

AGENCIES — XINHUA

Cuomo's towering plans for Manhattan draw fire

By BELINDA ROBINSON in New York
belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo wants to press ahead with a project to build 10 new skyscrapers in the heart of Manhattan, a construction project that could become one of the largest in the United States and help redevelopment of the nation's most-used rail station, Pennsylvania Station.

The buildings — five taller than 1,000 feet (304.8 meters) — would flank the area around the station, also known as Penn Station, and fund part of an upgrade to the transit link that served 600,000 passengers daily on trains, buses, subways and Amtrak before the pandemic.

Under the plan, dubbed the Empire Station Complex, Penn Station would undergo massive expansion. The proposed building project would create a high-rise business district. It would include

two hotels and stores, and three quarters of the buildings would be office space.

While Cuomo has wanted to kick start the project for several years, some elected officials, transportation advocates and residents in the area oppose it, saying it is not the right time.

The project would begin after a difficult year for New York real estate. There is more office space available for lease in Manhattan than at any point in 30 years, The New York Times said.

The market value of the city's office buildings have fallen 25 percent over the past year and residential sales took a hit due to the pandemic.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who has been a political nemesis for the governor, called the plan a "land grab that relies on overriding city rules".

State Senator Brad Hoylman, a Democrat representing Manhattan, said it was "a mega real estate

deal posing as a transit improvement plan".

The Empire Station Coalition, a group of transportation officials and civic groups, has said the project must focus on upgrading Penn station.

"Any master plan for Penn Station must start by getting the actual transit plan right — the current proposal treats that foundational question like an afterthought," said Barry Caro, senior adviser to ReThinkNYC, a New York nonprofit organization specializing in transportation infrastructure.

'Blighted' area

New York has traditionally regulated the use of most land in Manhattan. But the state has taken over the process around Penn Station by designating the area as "blighted".

Cuomo, who is in his third term, has less political clout this year after several women accused him of sexual harassment. He has also been accused of covering up the number

of deaths in nursing homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

In February he doubled down on the benefits of the proposed complex, saying it would be crucial for the city and forge "the next great investment".

The state of New York would put up \$16 billion toward building the new towers. Revenue from their leases and retail sales would be used to help cover costs, including billions of dollars in bonds needed for improving the rail terminal.

Neighborhood civic groups are concerned the project could change the area forever.

"This is a neighborhood with a character, a history and a soul," said Simeon Bankoff, executive director of the Historic Districts Council, a citywide advocate for New York's historic buildings and neighborhoods. "It cannot be treated as a blank space for ill-conceived and unsustainable real estate power fantasies."

After ransomware outage, fuel supplies on way to normal

ATLANTA — The operator of the country's largest gasoline pipeline, which was the subject of a ransomware attack, says it has resumed normal operations in delivering fuel to its markets, including a large swath of the East Coast.

Colonial Pipeline of Georgia began restarting the pipeline's operations on Wednesday evening, but had said it could take days for supplies to return to normal.

"Since that time we have returned the system to normal operations, delivering millions of gallons per hour to the markets we serve," Colonial Pipeline said on Saturday.

Those markets include Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Washington DC.

"All of these markets are now receiving product from our pipeline," the company said, noting how its employees "worked safely and tirelessly around the clock to get our lines up and running".

Fuel shortages that spread from the South, all but emptying stations in Washington DC, have been improving since a peak on Thursday night. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm said on Friday that the nation is "over

the hump", with about 200 stations returning to service every hour.

Shortage remains

Some stations were still out of fuel in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Saturday.

US gasoline demand dropped 12.6 percent from the previous week, probably due to an easing of "crazed" panic buying just after the pipeline shut, said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy.

The nationwide average for a gallon of regular unleaded petrol was \$3.04 on Saturday, compared with \$2.96 a week ago, said AAA, a feder-

ation of motor clubs throughout North America.

The hacking group blamed for the attack, DarkSide, said it had hacked four other companies, including a Toshiba subsidiary in Germany.

Colonial Pipeline has not said how much money the hackers sought or whether it had paid, but Bloomberg News and The New York Times said it paid nearly \$5 million.

The company said that on Monday it was due to resume its regular nomination process in which shippers seek space on the line.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Despising racism



People holding signs take part in a Stop Asian Hate rally in Oakland, California, on Saturday. DONG XUDONG / XINHUA