

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday at least 13,000, quote unquote, "terrorists" were among Palestinians killed during Israel's war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip and vowed to press ahead with an offensive in the south of the enclave, a move U.S. President Joe Biden has described as his "red line."

Nearly 31,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza during the five-month-long war. U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas dismisses Israel's toll for militants as attempts to portray fake victories.

War and hunger in Gaza cast a shadow over Ramadan. The conflict is looming over the usually festive holy month in Jerusalem. Reuters correspondent David Doyle has more.

Tens of thousands are expected every day at the Aqsa Mosque compound, one of the holiest sites in Islam. The area, which is also sacred to Jews who know it as Temple Mount, is a long-standing flashpoint for trouble.

Thousands of police have been deployed around the narrow streets of the Old City, where the usual Ramadan decorations have not been put up. Israeli police say they've been working to ensure a peaceful Ramadan.

Stall owner Hisham al-Salaymeh said people don't want to buy anything and no one is celebrating. This year, he says, there is no joy for Ramadan.

Reuters correspondent David Doyle.

Members of London's Jewish community on Sunday braved pouring rain and used traditional ram's horns in demanding the release of hostages being held in Gaza. The horns called shofars are normally blown at the holiest moments of the Jewish calendar.

The London event was one of several organized by Jewish communities worldwide.

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Ukraine's foreign minister, responding to Pope Francis's call to show the, quote unquote, "courage of the white flag" and negotiate an end to the war with Russia, said on Sunday Kyiv would never surrender until the Vatican to pay special heed to its role in World War II.

Francis made the comments in an interview made available in part over the weekend. He responded to a presenter's suggestions by saying when "things were not going well" for a party to a conflict, "you have to have the courage to negotiate."

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, writing on social media platform X, said "our flag is a yellow and blue one," referring to the Ukrainian national flag. Quote, "This is the flag by which we live, die and prevail. We shall never raise any other flags," he wrote.

There's continued fallout from the Republican Party response to U.S. President Joe Biden's State of the Union address after a senator used a decades-old example of rapes in Mexico to attack Biden border policy. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

Senator Katie Britt's spokesperson confirms she was talking about a young Mexican woman repeatedly raped in Mexico when Republican George W. Bush was president, not Biden. Britt used her story to chastise President Biden's actions on the border during her GOP response to his State of the Union.

"President Biden's border policies are a disgrace. This crisis is despicable."

The Alabama senator and her party have seized on a surge of migrants entering the country during Biden's term.

I'm Julie Walker.

A driver was arrested after crashing his car into the gates of Buckingham Palace in London. AP Correspondent Rica Ann Garcia reports.

Metropolitan Police said that the crash is not considered terrorism-related and no one was injured.

The driver was arrested on suspicion of criminal damage and held under the Mental Health Act after being taken to a hospital. He has since been released on bail.

The iconic palace entrance is now boarded up and barricaded with metal fencing as visitors strolled past in the rain.

Rica Ann Garcia, London.

President Emmanuel Macron said on Sunday for the first time that he backed new end of life legislation that would allow what he called, quote, "help to die" and wanted his government to put forward a draft bill to parliament.

France's neighbors Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands have adopted laws that allow medically assisted dying in some cases. But France has resisted that step, in part under pressure from the Catholic Church.

A 2016 law on the end of life authorizes deep sedation but only for people whose prognosis is threatened in the short term.

I'm Joe Ramsey.