

VOA NEWS

[April 14, 2024](#)

This is VOA News. I'm Alexis Strobe.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday that Israel has prepared for an attack by Iran and is ready for, quote, "any scenario" as Iran launched ballistic missiles and dozens of drones towards Israel.

Our defense systems are deployed. We are ready for any scenario, both defensively and offensively. The state of Israel is strong. The IDF is strong. The public is strong.

Booms and air raid sirens have sounded in Jerusalem after Iran launched dozens of drones and ballistic missiles towards Israel in an unprecedented revenge mission that pushes the Middle East closer to a region-wide war. The attack marks the first time Iran has ever launched a direct military assault on Israel.

The U.S. says it is down some of the Iran-launched attack drones flying toward Israel.

Iran had vowed revenge since an April 1 airstrike in Syria killed 2 Iranian generals inside an Iranian consular building. Iran accused Israel of being behind the attack.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a Saturday statement, quote, "the United States will stand with the people of Israel and support their defense against these threats from Iran."

Israel finds the body of a teen whose disappearance sparked a deadly settler attack in the West Bank. AP correspondent Mimmi Montgomery reports.

Israel's army says the body of a missing Israeli 14-year-old is found in the West Bank after being killed in what it labels a terrorist attack. It comes as violence escalates across the Israeli-occupied West Bank, with tensions simmering for months.

The teen's disappearance sparked a large attack by Israeli settlers on a Palestinian village, an attack that left one person dead and more than 20 injured.

According to Palestinian Authorities, settlers later returned to the village, setting fire to homes and cars. Tensions in the West Bank are especially high since the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

I'm Mimmi Montgomery.

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Iran's Revolutionary Guards seized a vessel in the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday after Tehran said it could close the crucial shipping route and warned it would retaliate for a suspected Israeli strike on its Syria consulate. [ale...] Alice Rizzo from Reuters has more.

Video obtained by voters showed a helicopter hovering over the vessel, which Iran said was linked with Israel. It comes days after Tehran said it could close the crucial shipping route and warned it would retaliate for a suspected Israeli attack on an Iranian consulate in Damascus.

A video claiming to show the seizure included a figure of sailing from a helicopter onto the ship. The vessel's operator confirmed Iran had seized the ship. It said it was working with the relevant authorities for its safe return and the well-being of its 25 crew members.

The incident comes amid rising regional tensions since the start of Israel's campaign in Gaza in October.

Alice Rizzo from Reuters.

The Holy See has formerly protested to France after a French court ruled that a former high-ranking Vatican official was liable for what the court determined to be the wrongful dismissal of a nun from a religious order.

In a statement Saturday, the Vatican said it had received the [no] no notification of any such verdict, but it said the ruling nevertheless represented, quote, "a grave violation" of the right to religious freedom.

According to French media, the Lorient tribunal on April 3 ruled in favor of the nun, who was forced to leave her religious order after a Vatican investigation.

Scientists have found that coral bleaching is occurring in deeper waters, including in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Olivia Zollino from Reuters has more.

Coral bleaching is occurring in deeper waters, according to Luiz Rocha with the Californian Academy of Sciences.

Despite its extensive protection, Rocha said the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is dying because of uncontrollable factors.

"When I see it happening in a place like that is what stuns me the most. It's that there's, there's very little we can do about it as individuals."

The last global mass coral bleaching event saw the Great Barrier Reef lose nearly a third of its corals from 2014 to 2017.

This year appears to be following a similar trend with reports of extensive bleaching across the Caribbean and the entirety of the Great Barrier Reef.

"If the bleaching continues the way it is, 50 years from now - right now we're facing like a big decline in populations - 50 years from now we might be facing extinction."

Olivia Zollino from Reuters.

Pakistani police are searching for gunmen who killed nine people after abducting them from a bus on a highway in the country's southwest.

The abduction took place Friday in Baluchistan province. Police say the gunmen stopped the bus, went through the passengers' ID cards and took nine people with them. Police later recovered the bodies under a bridge.

Police said the gunmen had earlier opened fire at a vehicle that failed to stop for their blockade, killing two people.

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