

# VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris said she sharply pressed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday about the humanitarian situation in Gaza in talks that were watched for signs of how she might shift American policy about Israel if she becomes president.

Harris told reporters after the meeting "Israel has a right to defend itself."

"I also expressed with the prime minister my serious concerns about the scale of human suffering in Gaza, including the death of far too many innocent civilians."

Hours earlier, U.S. President Joe Biden pressed for a cease-fire to the nine-month old war in Gaza during face-to-face talks with Netanyahu.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris's presidential campaign's first advertisement released on Thursday has a pop culture flair. AP correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

"In this election, we each face a question."

The video underscores a central campaign message about what kind of nation Americans want.

"We choose freedom."

"Freedom. Freedom. I can't move."

Set to a Beyoncé soundtrack, the video's being highlighted on social media as the campaign looks to reach younger voters.

"Let's get to work."

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

Harris vowed to empower labor unions and prevent school book bans while addressing a powerful teachers union on Thursday, seeking to draw a sharp contrast with her Republican rival for the presidency, Donald Trump.

In a 20-minute address in Houston, Texas, to the American Federation of Teachers, the 59-year-old focused on economic policy and worker's rights, touting plans for affordable health care and child care, and criticizing Republican Party members for blocking gun limits in the wake of school shootings.

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The White House on Thursday expressed concern about the threat of violence in Venezuela's election on Sunday and warned President Nicolás Maduro of the need to hold a fair vote free of political repression or intimidation.

Venezuelans will go to the polls in a presidential election, with Maduro seeking his third term as leader of the OPEC member-state. His challenger opposition candidate Edmundo González, has attracted significant support.

A raging wildfire has devastated a western Canadian tourist town as firefighters worked to save as many buildings as possible. Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner reports.

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith choked back tears at a news conference Thursday as she described the impact of a raging wildfire that has devastated the western Canadian tourist town of Jasper.

"We're seeing potentially 30 to 50 percent structural damage. We don't know particularly which structures have been damaged and which ones have been destroyed. But that's going to be a significant rebuild and significant displacement for a long period of time."

Jasper is in the middle of mountainous Jasper National Park in the province of Alberta.

The town and the park, which draw more than 2 million tourists a year, were evacuated on Monday.

Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner.

The Paris Olympics officially began with the opening ceremony on Friday. It's the city's first Olympic Games in a century. Lisa Bryant has more from the French capital.

Roughly 15 million visitors and more than 10,000 athletes are expected for these Games, but many Parisians have already left on holiday. Traditional tourists are staying away.

Organizers hope these Olympics will be unforgettable. They've promised the most environmentally friendly games ever.

Friday's Seine River ceremony, gathering athletes, political leaders and global stars, will be the first ever outside a stadium.

Lisa Bryant, VOA News, Paris.

Kenyan police detained several people on Thursday who attempted to present a petition to the president's office and lay flowers to honor those killed a month ago on the most violent day of anti-government protests, protesters said.

One of the protesters said on X some of the parents of people killed in the June 25 protest had been detained on Thursday. More than fifty people have been killed since mid-June, when protesters began taking to the streets to oppose tax increases proposed by President William Ruto, according to the government-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

KNCHR also has said that nearly 700 people have been arbitrarily detained and 59 have been abducted or are missing in connection with the protests.

I'm Joe Ramsey.