

VOA NEWS

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I'm VOA's Joe Ramsey with your worldwide news update.

Israel and Hamas on Wednesday reached a multi-phase cease-fire deal that will lead to the release of some hostages held by the militant group for more than a year. Linda Gradstein reports for VOA from Jerusalem.

On the streets of Gaza, Palestinians celebrated the cease-fire, which will end the fighting for 42 days, see the release of dozens of Israeli hostages and hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, and give more humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza who have been suffering a humanitarian crisis.

The Palestinians in Gaza have paid the heaviest price for the war, which began almost 16 months ago when Hamas invaded Israel. The Hamas-run Health Ministry says Israel has killed more than 46,000 Palestinians since then.

On the streets of Tel Aviv, some also celebrated.

The Hostage Family Forum called it a "significant step forward that brings us closer to seeing all the hostages return." However, they said in a statement, they also have "deep anxiety and concern ... regarding the possibility that the agreement might not be fully implemented" and hostages would be left behind.

Linda Gradstein, VOA News, Jerusalem.

White House correspondent Anita Powell has more from Washington.

President Joe Biden, nearing the final days of his presidency, hailed a three-phase cease-fire deal that ends 15 months of violence, displacement and anxiety.

"Fighting in Gaza will stop and soon the hostages will return home to their families."

President-elect Donald Trump said on his social media network that he was thrilled by the deal and that his administration would build upon its success to expand the U.S.-mediated Abraham Accords to normalize Arab-Israeli relations.

Anita Powell, VOA News, Washington.

This is VOA News.

Southern Californians continue to face the threat of powerful, gusty winds combined with low humidity as displaced residents struggle to make sense of the devastation caused by wildfires. Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener reports.

Thousands of firefighters continued to battle blazes in and around Los Angeles County on Wednesday making gains in some areas, but officials were on high alert for the eruption of new fires as powerful winds were forecast.

The Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire have consumed an area the size of Washington, D.C. and have left entire neighborhoods leveled. At least two dozen people have died.

Aaron Lubeley, who lost his Altadena home in the Eaton Fire, set up a table with water, food and necessary supplies for anyone who needs it.

"I had to find some meaning in why this happened."

Several schools in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood were seriously damaged in the fires. On Wednesday, students and teachers displaced from a Palisades elementary school were welcomed for classes at a school in Brentwood.

Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener.

AP correspondent Julie Walker has more.

With thousands left homeless from the devastating California wildfires still raging and more than two dozen deaths, officials are left defending last week's response.

LA City Fire Chief Kristin Crowley: "We followed the system. We searched where we could search."

Crowley under fire for not doubling the number of firefighters on duty last Tuesday as the winds picked up and having only five of more than 40 engines deployed, according to internal records obtained by *The Los Angeles Times*.

"We pre-deployed the necessary resources knowing that, or not knowing, I should be very specific, and where a fire might break out in the city."

The department calling in off-duty firefighters after the Palisades Fire erupted. Crowley says they're studying the response to determine how the department can do better in the future.

I'm Julie Walker.

Impeached South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has been taken to a detention center near Seoul over his imposition of martial law last month. Yoon underwent about 10 hours of questioning on Wednesday by the country's anti-corruption agency after he was detained at his presidential residence earlier in the day.

He recorded a video message before he was escorted to the agency's headquarters. Yoon lamented that the, quote, "rule of law has completely collapsed in this country."

Yoon faces the prospect of a lengthy prison term over potential rebellion charges.

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. Voanews.com. I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA News.