

# VOA NEWS

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

The head of the United Nations says U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal to move all Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip would be ethnic cleansing. AP correspondent Karen Chammas reports.

At a meeting of the General Assembly committee supporting Palestinian rights, U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said, "It is vital to stay true to the bedrock of international law. It is essential to avoid any form of ethnic cleansing."

He did not mention President Trump.

Just earlier, U.N. Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric was asked if the secretary-general believes Trump's plan for the U.S. to clean out and take over Gaza is ethnic cleansing. He replied, "Any forced displacement of people is tantamount to ethnic cleansing."

Guterres stressed that any lasting peace will require an end to Israeli occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem and progress towards a two-state solution.

I'm Karen Chammas.

A U.S. judge on Thursday temporarily blocked the Trump administration's proposal to federal workers until at least Monday, giving an initial win to labor unions who have sued to stop it. Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener reports.

Federal workers are under pressure from the Trump administration to leave their jobs in an unprecedented drive to overhaul the government. Workers had faced a midnight deadline to make their decision.

The offer promises to pay employees salaries until October, but that may not be ironclad. Current spending laws expire on March 14, and there is no guarantee that salaries will be funded beyond that point.

Many Democrats and labor unions said the offer is not trustworthy.

Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener.

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Some South African organizations that assist people with HIV are in limbo after the United States put a 90-day freeze on most foreign aid. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said he wants to bring the agency's activities in line with the new government's "America First" agenda. Kate Bartlett reports from Johannesburg.

South Africa has the highest number of HIV-positive people in the world, about 8 million, but has also been a huge success story in terms of treatment and preventing new infections. That's largely due to the money poured into expert HIV care here, some 17 percent of which comes from a U.S. program called the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR.

But a 90-day foreign aid funding freeze is in effect, following an executive order by President Trump last month, while the State Department has issued a waiver to continue paying for "life-saving" services. What that includes remains unclear to many South African organizations that receive funding from PEPFAR.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said this week that the waiver was clear.

"If it saves lives, if it's emergency life-saving aid - food, medicine, whatever - they have a waiver. I don't know how much clearer we can be."

The South African government says it was blindsided by the U.S. aid freeze, according to Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi, who convened a meeting about PEPFAR on Wednesday. Motsoaledi also said he has sought clarification on the waiver.

"If you say American money cannot be used for LGBTQWI+ and we do the counseling and testing and somebody who falls within that category, transgender, tests HIV-positive, can they not be helped? Even if it's lifesaving?"

On Wednesday, a group of health organizations sent a letter to the South African government saying at least 900,000 patients with HIV were directly affected by the U.S. stop-work orders.

Kate Bartlett, VOA News, Johannesburg.

President Trump's move to freeze most foreign aid has also brought health care services to a halt at refugee camps on the Thai-Myanmar border. Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones reports.

A group of Thai medics battled to save the life of elderly Myanmar refugee Adabi. Previously the U.S.-funded International Rescue Committee would have treated her and the tens of thousands of other refugees living in camps on the Thai-Myanmar border.

But President Trump's freeze on most foreign aid has forced seriously ill patients like Adabi to rely on Thailand's state-run facilities instead. Last week, the government vowed to support refugee health care following the U.S. aid suspension.

Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones.

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website, [voanews.com](http://voanews.com). I'm Joe Ramsey, VOA News.