

VOA NEWS

February 9, 2025

Hi, I'm VOA's Alexis Strobe with your worldwide news update.

Israel and Hamas have done another hostage exchange for prisoners on Saturday. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

Hamas released three more hostages, Eli Sharabi, Ohad Ben Ami and Or Levy. Cheers from Israelis watching on an outdoor screen in Tel Aviv.

The three looking gaunt and frail, all taken when Hamas attacked Israel on October 7. In exchange, 183 Palestinian prisoners were released.

With Gazans cheering for them on the strip, this was the fifth swap in the six-week cease-fire deal. Israel spokesman Gal Hirsch says there are still 76 more hostages, alive and dead, in Hamas captivity.

He also says Israel views the condition and treatment of the three hostages with great severity and will not remain silent and action will be taken accordingly.

I'm Julie Walker.

Billionaire Elon Musk's U.S. government efficiency team was halted on Saturday from carrying out some of its plans to shrink federal bureaucracies as two judges made temporary rulings in separate cases against them. Reuters correspondent Diane To reports.

A U.S. judge ruled early on Saturday to temporarily block Elon Musk's government efficiency team from accessing the Treasury Department's payment and data systems.

It came after another judge on Friday put Musk's plans to dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, on hold. The agency's sign and flag outside its headquarters in Washington, D.C., were removed on Friday, a day before over 2,000 USAID workers were set to go on paid leave.

But a U.S. district judge ordered those plans be paused and reinstated some 500 employees who had already been furloughed.

That was Reuters correspondent Diane To.

This is VOA News.

Authorities are working to recover the wreckage of a plane crash in western Alaska that killed 10 people while investigators are trying to determine what caused the small commuter aircraft to go down in the icy Bering Sea. VOA's Christina Menenti reports.

Officials said contact with the Cessna Caravan was lost less than an hour after it left on Thursday. The wreckage was found Friday by rescuers who were searching by helicopter. All nine passengers and the pilot were killed.

Crews on Saturday were racing to recover the wreckage and the remains of those killed in the crash before expected high winds and snow.

Radar data provided by the U.S. Civil Air Patrol indicated the plane rapidly lost elevation and speed, but it's not clear why that happened, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

Christina Menenti, VOA News.

More than 200,000 protesters have demonstrated in Munich against far-right extremism ahead of the German general election.

The far-right anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party is in second place in recent polls and has prompted widespread protests across the country before voters cast their ballots on February 23.

Saturday's protest in Munich brought a significantly larger crowd than expected. The police estimated the crowd at 200,000 people, according to reports, but the event's organizers estimated it could be up to 320,000.

President Donald Trump has followed through with a promise to punish South Africa for what he calls human rights violations against white South Africans. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

President Donald Trump on Friday signed an executive order stopping all aid to South Africa for what he says is the country's new land expropriation law that discriminates against white Afrikaners and Trump wants to give refugee status to white South Africans.

Because of apartheid, whites now make up 7 percent of South Africa's population but own about 70 percent of farming land. The new law doesn't mention race even though some Afrikaners fear the act will target them and their land.

??? ??? is a black South African living in Johannesburg.

"The act does not specify the race of any people. So I think if it causes any harm or danger, it's to all people."

White South African Sharna Smith says Trump doesn't need to give refugee status to Afrikaners.

"There's (There're) major conflicts in many other countries of the world that actually deserve an asylum better than what we do in South Africa."

I'm Donna Warder.

Chinese rescuers are searching for some 30 people after a landslide in southwestern Sichuan province buried 10 houses. The Ministry of Emergency Management deployed hundreds of rescuers, including firefighters, following the landslide Saturday in the Junlian county.

State broadcaster CCTV said two people were pulled out alive and about 200 others evacuated.

That wraps up this update, but the world of news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.