

VOA NEWS

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

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Friday that Israel would make Hamas pay for failing to release the body of hostage Shiri Bibas as agreed in the latest potential threat to the month-old cease-fire. Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones reports.

Hamas said Bibas' remains appeared to have been mixed with others after an Israeli airstrike hit the place she was being held, later adding that it was investigating the possible error.

Netanyahu gave no details on a possible Israeli response, but the incident highlights the fragility of the month-old cease-fire deal reached with U.S. backing and help from Qatar and Egypt.

The failure to return Bibas' body during this staged public handover caused outrage in Israel.

"It's like they make a joke of us and the mother just sent the body and it's so painful, so the family has to go and bury them and to make sort of a closure and now the mother is missing and it's so frustrating."

Hamas is due to release six living hostages on Saturday, with the start of the negotiations for the cease-fire's second phase expected in the coming days.

That was Reuters correspondent Fiona Jones.

U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance has criticized Germany's free speech laws during an appearance at a conservative gathering outside Washington. He linked Germany's limits against hate speech to American troops stationed there.

German laws set restrictions on free speech, including the long-standing ban on Holocaust denial and any glorification of the country's Nazi past.

The limits are an effort to curb extremism and incitement and have led authorities to policing the internet for hate speech and arresting people for allegedly posting and reposting such comments.

Vance's remarks Thursday followed his speech earlier this month at the Munich Security Conference.

This is VOA News.

The Trump administration has the go-ahead to pull thousands of USAID staffers off the job. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

A federal judge has removed a temporary block on the Trump administration's efforts to remove all but a small percentage of staffers at the U.S. Agency for International Development from their posts.

U.S. District Judge Carl Nichols' ruling comes following a lawsuit filed by unions on behalf of USAID employees. They said the rush to dismantle the agency had cut off some staffers overseas from emergency communication systems, including some in danger of political violence in Congo.

The Trump administration had given staffers abroad 30 days to move back to the U.S. or the government wouldn't pay for the move.

Donna Warder, Washington.

A major cryptocurrency exchange says it was the victim of a sophisticated hack that stole about \$1.5 billion worth of digital currency, marking one of the biggest online thefts of all time.

Bybit said Friday that a routine transfer of Ethereum, one of the most popular cryptocurrencies, between digital wallets was "manipulated" by an attacker who transferred the crypto to an unidentified address.

The company sought to reassure customers that their cryptocurrency holdings with the exchange were safe. The company added that news of the hack had led to a surge in withdrawal requests and there could be delays in processing them.

Pope Francis remains in Rome's Gemelli Hospital on Friday, marking a week since he was admitted after his bronchitis worsened. VOA's Cristina Menenti reports.

Gemelli Hospital's Dr. Sergio Alfieri and Francis' personal physician, Dr. Luigi Carbone, gave a detailed update on Francis' condition via a press conference on Friday.

Alfieri says the pope is likely to continue to stay in the hospital at least all of next week.

"The question is, is the pope out of danger? No, the pope is not out of danger."

Francis has been diagnosed with pneumonia in both lungs, along with a bacterial, viral and fungal infection.

Some of Francis' cardinals have begun responding to the obvious question that is circulating whether Francis might resign. Francis has said he would consider it after Pope Benedict "opened the door" to popes retiring but has asserted recently that the job of pope is for life.

Cristina Menenti, VOA News.

Police in Berlin say they have arrested a man suspected in a stabbing attack at the city's Holocaust Memorial that left one man seriously injured.

There was no immediate indication of a motive for the attack, which comes two days before Germans vote in a national election on Sunday.

Police spokeswoman Florian Nath told The Associated Press that the attack happened at 6 p.m., "probably with a knife."

Nearly three hours later, a male suspect approached officers with blood on his hands and was taken into custody.

The victim was identified as a 30-year-old Spanish man who was taken to a hospital.

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