

# VOA NEWS

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

Israel says it will send a delegation to Qatar on Monday in an effort to advance the negotiations around the cease-fire in Gaza. Hamas reports positive signals in talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on starting negotiations on the truce's delayed second phase.

Talks on the second phase should have started a month ago. There was no immediate comment from the White House, which on Wednesday made the surprise confirmation of direct U.S. talks with Hamas.

Israel, over the past week, has pressed Hamas to release half the remaining hostages in return for an extension of the first phase that ended last weekend.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol walked out of a detention center on Saturday after prosecutors decided not to appeal a court decision to cancel the impeached leader's arrest warrant on insurrection charges. Reuters correspondent Trevor Koroll reports.

The Seoul Central District Court canceled Yoon's arrest warrant on Friday, citing the timing of his indictment and questions about the legality of the investigation process.

In his statement, Yoon thanked the court, quote, "for their courage and determination in correcting the illegality."

The main opposition Democratic Party criticized the prosecutor's decision and urged the Constitutional Court to remove Yoon from office as soon as possible. Prosecutors could not immediately be reached for comment.

Some 55,000 Yoon supporters rallied in Seoul on Saturday, while more than 32,000 demonstrated against him, the Yonhap news agency reported, citing unofficial police estimates.

Still, the public remains largely anti-Yoon. Sixty percent of respondents to a Gallup Korea poll released on Friday said he should be removed from office, while 35 percent opposed removing him.

In his impeachment trial, the Constitutional Court is expected to decide in coming days whether to reinstate or remove Yoon.

That was Reuters correspondent Trevor Koroll.

This is VOA News.

Iran's top leader rejects talks with the U.S. over missile range and regional influence. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei says he rejects a U.S. push for talks between the two countries because they would be aimed at imposing restrictions on Iranian missile range and its regional influence.

Speaking to a group of officials Saturday, Khamenei did not identify the U.S. by name but said a "bullying government" was persistent in its push for holding talks.

His remarks came a day after President Trump acknowledged sending a letter to Iran seeking a new deal with the country to restrain its rapidly advancing nuclear program and replace the nuclear deal he withdrew America from during his first term in office.

I'm Julie Walker.

A war monitoring group says the death toll from two days of clashes between security forces and loyalists of ousted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 1,000, including nearly 750 civilians, making it one of the deadliest outbreaks of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that in addition to 745 civilians, 125 members of the government's security forces and 148 militants with armed groups affiliated with deposed President Bashar al-Assad were killed.

Protesters on International Women's Day demand equal rights, an end to discrimination and sexual violence. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

In Istanbul, Turkey, crowds of demonstrators spoke out against femicide, which demonstrator Yaz Gülgün says is extremely high. She says there's bullying at work and pressure from husbands and fathers at home, and that just the other day a woman landscaper went missing in Athens.

This protester named Matilda from Brussels says so much needs to be done to improve life for women.

"I believe that we are in 2025, but still there are many, many things to improve, many things to do, also with the context that we know that women's rights are not something settled, that we have to keep going."

Women took to the streets all across Europe, Africa and South America.

I'm Donna Warder.

The Vatican says Pope Francis is responding well to therapy for double pneumonia and has shown a gradual slight improvement in recent days, but as a precaution, his doctors have decided to keep his prognosis as guarded.

Doctors reported in a Vatican statement on Saturday that Francis has remained stable with no fever and good oxygen levels in his blood.

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