

# Iran allows Chinese vessels through Hormuz; Israel threatens defamation suit against NYT; Over 60 killed in Sudan

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## Iran and Ceasefire

- **Iran said to be allowing Chinese vessels through the Strait of Hormuz:** Iran has reportedly begun [allowing](#) Chinese vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz based on the two countries' "deep relations" and "strategic partnership," an unnamed informed source told the semi-official Fars News Agency. The report follows shipping data showing several China-linked cargo ships and tankers, including the Yuan Hua Hu crude carrier, transiting the strait on Wednesday. About 30 vessels have crossed the Strait of Hormuz with Iranian authorization since Wednesday evening, according to the state broadcaster IRIB. At a BRICS meeting in India, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said, "In our view, the strait of Hormuz is open to all commercial ships, but they must cooperate with our naval forces."
- **Vessel seized near Fujairah, Indian vessel reportedly sunk off the coast of Oman:** The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre [said](#) Wednesday it received a report of a vessel being seized by unauthorized personnel while anchored roughly 38 nautical miles from the UAE's Fujairah. The vessel is now heading toward Iranian territorial waters, according to UKMTO. Separately, an Indian flagged vessel, the MSV Haj Ali, was reportedly [sunk](#) off the coast of Oman, according to the maritime security company Vanguard. The vessel, which was transporting livestock from Somalia to the UAE, was subject to an explosion "believed to have been caused by a drone or missile strike." Its 14 crew members were forced by the explosion to abandon ship.
- **UAE comes under scrutiny for ties with Israel, conduct during the war:** The Israeli prime minister's office [announced](#) Wednesday that Benjamin Netanyahu had secretly visited the United Arab Emirates during the Iran war and met with Emirati President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed in what it called a "historic breakthrough in relations." The UAE Foreign Ministry rejected the claim minutes later, saying it "denies what is being circulated regarding a visit by the Israeli Prime Minister or the reception of an Israeli military delegation." Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a social media [post](#) that "Netanyahu has now publicly revealed what Iran's security services long ago conveyed to our

leadership” and warned that “those colluding with Israel to sow division will be held to account.” At a BRICS meeting Thursday morning in New Delhi, Aragchi went further, accusing the UAE of being “directly involved in the act of aggression against my country” and of allowing “their territory to be used to fire artillery and equipment against us.” Directly addressing the country, Aragchi said that its “alliance with the Israelis did not protect it” and urged it to “reconsider” its policy towards Iran.

- **Saudi warplanes struck Iran-allied militia targets in Iraq, report says:** Saudi Air Force fighter jets [bombed](#) Iran-linked militia sites near the kingdom’s northern border with Iraq during the Iran War, targeting launch points used to fire drones and missiles at Gulf states, according to a Reuters report published Wednesday. Separately, rockets fired from Kuwaiti territory struck militia positions in southern Iraq in April, killing several fighters and destroying a Kataib Hezbollah communications and drone facility—though Reuters could not confirm whether the strikes were carried out by Kuwait’s armed forces or the U.S. military, which maintains a large presence in the country.

- **Iran calls Kuwait’s detention of four Iranians “illegal”:** Iran accused Kuwait of trying to “sow discord” by detaining four Iranians. On Tuesday, Kuwait said four men were detained, accusing them of being Revolutionary Guard operatives, and two escaped while trying to infiltrate Bubiyan Island in the northwest corner of the Persian Gulf on May 1. “In clear attempt to sow discord, Kuwait has unlawfully attacked an Iranian boat and detained 4 of our citizens in the Persian Gulf,” Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a social media [post](#). “This illegal act took place near island used by the U.S. to attack Iran. We demand immediate release of our nationals and reserve right to respond.”

- **Classified CIA analysis finds Gulf allies split on support for the Iran war:** A classified CIA analysis [circulating](#) this week found that Washington’s Gulf allies are divided over how much military support to provide for the Trump administration’s war against Iran, sources familiar with the assessment told Capital & Empire. The UAE and Bahrain favor continued U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, while Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Kuwait support negotiations, and Oman opposes the U.S. naval blockade of Iranian ports and may be open to joint administration of the Strait of Hormuz with Iran. Saudi Arabia has also moved to constrain U.S. military options by denying access, basing, and overflight rights for “Project Freedom”—the planned U.S. naval operation to guide commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz—despite a personal appeal from President Donald Trump to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. More on this report from Aida Chavez at Capital & Empire, [here](#).

# Lebanon

- **Israel continues to bombard Lebanon on Thursday:** An Israeli airstrike on a residential building at dawn on Thursday **killed** two people in Ezzedine, the National News Agency reported, and destroyed the building entirely. A drone attack **reportedly** wounded one near Zrariyeh, and Israeli strikes also targeted Lebbaya Yohmor, and Sohmor in the western part of the Bekaa, and Hadatha in Bint Jbeil, with another strike **wounding** at least three in Kfar Melki.
- **Hezbollah drone strike wounds three Israelis near border:** A drone launched by Hezbollah **struck** the parking lot of the Rosh Hanikra grottoes near the Lebanese-Israeli border on Thursday, injuring three Israelis, according to the Israeli military via Ynet. One person was reported to be in critical condition and another seriously wounded.
- **Israeli attacks kill at least 15 across Lebanon on Wednesday:** Israeli attacks **killed** at least 15 people, including two children, across Lebanon on Wednesday, according to Lebanon's National News Agency. Strikes were also **reported** in Al-Halousiyeh, Siddiqin, Arabsalim, Kafra in Bint Jbeil, Tibnin, and Rihane, with some reported near schools and hospitals. The Israeli military additionally issued forced displacement orders for six southern villages and warned that anyone remaining "endangers their life."
- **UNICEF: At least 59 child casualties in Lebanon in the past week:** UNICEF **issued** a statement on Thursday on the impact of Israel's attacks in Lebanon on children, with at least 59 children killed or injured in the country in the last week alone, and 23 children killed and 93 injured since a ceasefire was agreed to. UNICEF also warned that more than 770,000 children in Lebanon are at risk of developing chronic mental health issues due to "heightened distress from repeated exposure to violence, loss and displacement." The group's regional director said, "Children are being killed and injured when they should be returning to classrooms, playing with friends, and recovering from months of fear and upheaval."
- **Lebanon files formal UN complaint against Iran:** The Lebanese government **submitted** a formal complaint to the United Nations against Iran late last month accusing Tehran of making inaccurate statements regarding the killing of four Iranians in an Israeli strike on the Ramada Hotel in Beirut on March 8, and alleging that some of those killed were not officially registered as diplomats but were in fact Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders operating under diplomatic cover in violation of Lebanese sovereignty. In a letter outlining the complaint made public on Wednesday, Lebanese ambassador to the UN Ahmad Arafat accused Tehran of "dragging" the country into a war it did not choose. It also accused the Iranians of ignoring an order by the Lebanese Foreign Ministry to expel its ambassador, Mohammed Reza Sheibani.

# Palestine

- **Casualty count:** Over the last 24 hours, two Palestinians were killed—one due to wounds sustained in earlier attacks and another whose body was recovered from under the rubble—and 24 were injured across Gaza. The total recorded death toll since October 7, 2023 has risen to 72,744 killed, with 172,588 injured. Since October 11, the first full day of the so-called ceasefire, Israel has killed at least 857 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 2,486, while 771 bodies have been recovered from under the rubble, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.
- **Israeli attacks in Gaza City and Jabalia:** An Israeli quadcopter drone [dropped](#) a bomb on Old Gaza Street in Jabalia on Thursday morning, killing one Palestinian, according to WAFA. Another Palestinian was killed by Israeli army sniper fire near an UNRWA clinic in Jabalia Camp. Israeli forces also shot and wounded several others near the Bani Suheila roundabout east of Khan Younis.
- **Israeli settlers burn farmland in al-Mughayyir:** Israeli settlers set [fire](#) Wednesday night to agricultural land in the plain of al-Mughayyir village, northeast of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, while Israeli forces who stormed the village fired illumination bombs and tear gas at Palestinian homes as residents tried to confront the attackers and extinguish the blaze, according to WAFA.
- **Mladenov outlines reconstruction framework, blames Hamas for deadlock:** Nickolay Mladenov, the “Board of Peace” envoy overseeing the U.S.-brokered Gaza ceasefire framework, [addressed](#) journalists in Jerusalem Wednesday after meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mladenov said that the ceasefire is “far from perfect,” with daily violations continuing to kill civilians, but said truck deliveries into Gaza have risen from 1,300 to over 4,000 per week—figures all aid agencies on the ground dispute, saying less than 40% of the aid promised under the ceasefire is entering. Mladenov also blamed Hamas for the present deadlock, particularly its refusal to disarm. He said a 15-point implementation roadmap has been presented to Hamas twice in Cairo, and accused the group of “consolidating its grip” on Gaza’s population and of blocking approved contractors from building shelter in the Strip, neither of which he substantiated with evidence. Hamas has repeatedly said it will not discuss Phase 2 of the plan, including disarmament, until Israel fulfills its Phase 1 obligations: halting strikes and killings, allowing sufficient aid and movement through Rafah and initial rehabilitation.
- **Board of Peace preparing “plan B” for Gaza reconstruction:** The U.S.-led Board of Peace is [preparing](#) a contingency plan to begin implementing President Donald Trump’s 20-point Gaza framework in areas under Israeli control after disarmament negotiations have

reached a deadlock, Axios reported on Wednesday. The proposal would move the Palestinian technocratic government from Cairo into Israeli-controlled parts of Gaza, launch reconstruction projects, deploy an International Stabilization Force, and train the new Palestinian police force in Egypt—though Board of Peace officials acknowledged the risk of creating “two Gazas.”

- **Israel escalates Gaza attacks by 35%:** Israel has drastically [escalated](#) its attacks on Gaza in the five weeks since halting its joint bombing campaign against Iran, carrying out 35% more strikes in April than in March, according to conflict monitor ACLED. Gaza’s Ministry of Health recorded 120 Palestinians killed—including eight women and 13 children—since the U.S.-Israel war on Iran halted on April 8, a 20% increase compared with the five weeks prior when Israel was striking Iran.

- **Israeli firms developed technology to track and identify Starlink users worldwide, Haaretz finds:** Two Israeli-linked companies have [developed](#) systems capable of locating Starlink satellite terminals globally and, in some cases, identifying the people behind the accounts, using “data fusion” techniques that combine large volumes of digital and geolocation data rather than directly hacking the network, according to an investigation published by Haaretz. One previously unknown firm, TargetTeam, reportedly operates from Cyprus and has built a system called “Stargetz” that can monitor nearly one million Starlink terminals worldwide and de-anonymize around 200,000 of them; a second company, Rayzone, sells similar capabilities as part of a broader intelligence suite overseen by the Israeli defense ministry. Amnesty International’s Security Lab warned the technology posed serious risks to journalists, activists, and civilians in conflict zones, noting that Starlink has become a critical communications lifeline for Ukrainian forces and aid workers in Gaza.

- **Israeli residents say IDF deleted portions of their October 7 security footage:** Residents of Kibbutz Be’eri [say](#) a classified Israel Defense Forces reserve unit composed of veterans from elite units seized their security camera recordings on October 9, 2023, then returned the materials with portions allegedly deleted, according to a report from Israel Hayom published on Thursday. “The decisions to delete materials were made ‘under fluorescent lights’—it’s a conscious decision, not one made in the chaos of combat,” one Be’eri source told the outlet, adding ominously that “the fewer witnesses there are [for a prospective investigative commission], the less damage certain people in the military will sustain.”

- **Israel threatens to sue New York Times over Kristof article documenting sexual violence against Palestinians:** Israel threatened to file a defamation lawsuit against The New York Times over an article in the Opinion section by columnist Nicholas Kristof documenting widespread and systematic sexual abuse of Palestinian detainees by Israeli forces. Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gideon Saar called the article “one of the most hideous and distorted lies ever published against the State of Israel in the modern press,” in a joint [statement](#) on Thursday. Israel’s use of sexual violence against Palestinians has been previously documented by the United Nations and several international human rights organizations.

## U.S. News

*By Julian Andreone, with Ryan Grim. Have a tip on Capitol Hill? Email Andreone at [Julian@dropsitenews.com](mailto:Julian@dropsitenews.com).*

· **Trump and Xi open Beijing summit with friendly overtures, Trump claims joint agreement on Iran nuclear weapons and Hormuz:** President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping [opened](#) two days of high-stakes meetings in Beijing on Thursday with warm personal exchanges and vows to deepen trade ties, with Trump praising Xi as a “great leader” and Xi calling for the two countries to be “partners rather than rivals.” Xi warned Trump privately that Taiwan remains the most important issue between the two countries and that if handled poorly could push the relationship into “a very dangerous situation,” according to Chinese state media. Trump is reportedly seeking Xi’s help in pressuring Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and abandon its nuclear program. “The two sides agreed that the Strait of Hormuz must remain open to support the free flow of energy,” the White House [said](#) in a readout. “President Xi also made clear China’s opposition to the militarization of the Strait and any effort to charge a toll for its use, and he expressed interest in purchasing more American oil to reduce China’s dependence on the Strait in the future. Both countries agreed that Iran can never have a nuclear weapon.” Beijing’s own readout did not confirm any of the comments.

· **Senate blocks Iran war powers resolution 49–50 in closest vote yet:** The Senate [voted](#) 49–50 on Tuesday to block a War Powers Resolution on the Iran war introduced by **Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.)**, the seventh failed attempt to advance limits on President Donald Trump’s campaign against Iran since the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran on February 28. The vote was the closest yet and the first procedural test since the War Powers Act’s 60-day deadline expired on May 1. Three Republicans broke with their party to support the measure—**Sens. Lisa Murkowski (Ala.), Susan Collins (Maine), and Rand Paul (Ky.)**—while Sen. **John Fetterman (Pa.)** was the sole Democrat to vote against it. Democratic leadership said it plans to continue forcing weekly war powers votes to sustain pressure on the conflict.

- **House Democrats will force vote on Ukraine aid and Russia sanctions:** House Democrats [secured](#) the 218 signatures needed Wednesday to bypass Speaker Mike Johnson and force a floor vote on a package imposing new sanctions on Russia and authorizing \$1.3 billion in military aid and up to \$8 billion in loans for Ukraine. The petition, introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee ranking member **Rep. Greg Meeks (N.Y.)**, was signed by all 215 House Democrats along with Republican **Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (Pa.), Don Bacon (Neb.),** and **Kevin Kiley (Calif.)**, who provided the deciding signature. The vote is expected after Memorial Day but faces long odds in the GOP-controlled Senate and White House.

- **U.S. Army scrambles to cut training amid \$4-6 billion budget shortfall:** The U.S. Army is [grappling](#) with a sudden budget shortfall of \$4 billion to \$6 billion and has begun slashing training across the force, canceling elite schools and unit-level exercises months before the fiscal year ends September 30, according to internal documents reviewed by ABC News. Major cost drivers include the Iran war, an expanding southern border mission, a National Guard deployment in Washington that alone is projected to cost roughly \$1.1 billion this year, and ballooning personnel expenses from covering Department of Homeland Security funding lapses. The III Armored Corps—commanding some 70,000 soldiers representing nearly half of the Army’s combat power—is expected to absorb much of the cuts, with internal documents warning that its aviation units will deploy next year at “a lower state of readiness” and that it will take a full year to rebuild “combat proficiency” after pilot flight hours are slashed to mandatory minimums.

- **Trump administration withholds \$1.3 billion in Medicaid payments to California:** Vice President **JD Vance** [announced](#) Wednesday that the Trump administration is suspending \$1.3 billion in Medicaid payments to California and threatening to freeze federal funds to all 50 states if they fail to prosecute Medicaid fraud aggressively. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services administrator Mehmet Oz said California’s records had generated “major red flags,” citing \$630 million in disputed billing, \$500 million in home health services, and \$200 million in expenditures linked to coverage for undocumented immigrants. The administration also announced that it is imposing a six-month moratorium on new Medicare enrollment for hospices and home health agencies.

- **Three southern states set to change their congressional maps:**

- Louisiana Senate Republicans [voted](#) early Wednesday to advance a new congressional map that would give the GOP a fifth House seat in the state, shifting the current 4-2 Republican-Democratic delegation to a 5-1 split, following the Supreme Court’s ruling in Louisiana v. Callais that struck down the state’s previous lines as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. The sole remaining Democratic district largely

preserves the New Orleans-area seat held by **Rep. Troy Carter**, but it also stretches into Baton Rouge, where **Rep. Cleo Fields** currently represents a separate majority-Black district, potentially setting up a member-versus-member primary contest. The map still requires a full Senate vote and House approval.

- South Carolina Republican Gov. **Henry McMaster** is **expected** to announce a special session on redistricting that would allow the GOP-controlled legislature to dismantle the district of Rep. Jim Clyburn—the state’s sole Democratic House member—leaving South Carolina with a likely 7-0 Republican congressional delegation, Politico reported on Wednesday. The move is a reversal of McMaster’s earlier position and follows direct pressure from President Donald Trump and his allies to redistrict the state.

- Georgia Republican Gov. **Brian Kemp** **signed** a proclamation on Wednesday convening the state legislature for a special session on June 17 to redraw congressional and state legislative maps ahead of the 2028 election cycle. “It’s clear that Callais requires Georgia to adopt new electoral maps before the 2028 election cycle,” Kemp said in response to the Supreme Court’s decision.

- **Twenty House Democrats demand suspension of joint U.S.-Ecuador military operations:** Twenty House Democrats **sent** a letter Wednesday to War Secretary **Pete Hegseth** demanding the immediate suspension of joint U.S.-Ecuador military operations and a full legal accounting of previous operations, citing reporting that U.S.-backed forces bombed a civilian cattle farm in northern Ecuador with no known links to drug trafficking. The letter also points to evidence that residents of the farm were interrogated, beaten, had their homes burned, and were subjected to torture before the aerial bombardment. The letter points out that the operations were never authorized by Congress, and that the operations may have violated the Leahy Law, which bars aid to foreign militaries credibly accused of human rights violations. Signatories include **Reps. Jesús “Chuy” García (Ill.), Greg Casar (Texas), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.), Ro Khanna (Calif.), Ilhan Omar (Minn.), Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (N.Y.), and Pramila Jayapal (Wash.)**.

- **Federal judge suspends sanctions against UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese:** A U.S. federal judge temporarily **blocked** sanctions imposed by the Trump administration against United Nations Special Rapporteur **Francesca Albanese** on Wednesday. The sanctions, which barred Albanese from entering the U.S. and restricted her access to banking, were announced in July 2025 after Albanese publicly criticized Washington’s policy on Israel’s genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. Albanese’s husband and daughter—a U.S. citizen—filed the lawsuit in February against the Trump administration over the sanctions. In his **court order** on Wednesday granting a preliminary

injunction against the sanctions, U.S. District Judge Richard Leon wrote, “Albanese has done nothing more than speak.” Albanese had recommended that the International Criminal Court (ICC) pursue war crimes prosecutions against Israeli and U.S. nationals. “It is undisputed that her recommendations have no binding effect on the ICC’s actions—they are nothing more than her opinion.” He added, “Protecting the freedom of speech is ‘always’ in the public interest.”

· **Drug industry pushes unreliable blood tests and dangerous medication for Alzheimer’s:** A new investigation from the Lever [finds](#) that the campaign to expand FDA-cleared Alzheimer’s blood tests to cognitively healthy Americans is being driven largely by pharmaceutical companies and industry-funded advocates with undisclosed financial conflicts—including former CDC Director **Robert Redfield**, who collected \$638,000 from test manufacturer Roche while publishing op-eds urging widespread screening. Independent experts warn the tests are unreliable as screening tools—only 18% of cognitively normal people who test positive develop dementia within ten years—while the anti-amyloid drugs patients are funneled toward, including Eli Lilly’s Kisunla, cause brain swelling and hemorrhages in more than a third of trial participants, with researchers finding “little to no” correlation between amyloid reduction and cognitive benefit. If bipartisan legislation to have these tests covered by Medicare passes, the eligible treatment market would expand from 592,000 to an estimated 47 million Americans. Read more about the drug industry’s influence campaign and ties to lawmakers and major nonprofits in The Lever’s full report, available [here](#).

· **ICE contractors donated \$1.7 million to 168 members of Congress, with Palantir executives giving more to Democrats than Republicans:** Executives at ICE’s biggest contractors [donated](#) more than \$1.7 million to 168 members of Congress across the 2022, 2024, and 2026 election cycles, with Palantir alone accounting for over \$1.3 million, according to a report from The Appeal. Palantir’s executives, the report also found, donated roughly twice as much to Democrats as to Republicans. Private prison companies GEO Group and CoreCivic directed nearly all of their roughly \$675,000 in PAC donations to Republicans; only **Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-Texas)** received donations from the executives of these companies. Several Democrats who have publicly opposed the Trump administration’s deportation agenda, including House Minority Leader **Hakeem Jeffries (N.Y.)** and **Reps. Josh Riley (N.Y.), Maggie Goodlander (N.H.), Pete Aguilar (Ca.), and Sen. Ruben Gallego (Ariz.)** received Palantir contributions. More on these donations can be found at In These Times, [here](#).

## Other International News

- **Somali pirates demand \$10 million ransom for oil tanker hijacked off Yemen coast amid Hormuz disruptions:** Somali pirates are demanding \$10 million for the release of the oil tanker MT Eureka, seized on May 2 near the Yemeni port of Qana and now anchored off the Somali fishing town of Bander Beyla with roughly 30 armed pirates and 12 crew members—including eight Egyptians—on board. The hijacking is the second in ten days and is part of a broader resurgence of Somali piracy fueled in part by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which has rerouted international maritime traffic through the Red Sea and past Somali waters. The MT Eureka, owned by a UAE-based shipping company and carrying 20,400 barrels of diesel, had departed the Emirati port of Fujairah before it was taken. **Mohamed Gabobe’s full piece for Drop Site on the ransom negotiations is available [here](#).**

- **Cuba is completely out of diesel and fuel oil:** Cuba has completely [exhausted](#) its diesel and fuel oil reserves, Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy announced Wednesday on state media, prompting protests across the capital on Wednesday evening. Some districts in the capital are without light for 20 to 22 hours a day, the minister added in his announcement. Neither Mexico nor Venezuela, once top suppliers, have sent fuel to the island since President Donald Trump’s January 2026 executive order threatening tariffs on any country shipping fuel to Cuba. The United Nations last week called the fuel blockade unlawful, saying it had obstructed “the Cuban people’s right to development while undermining their rights to food, education, health, and water and sanitation.”

- Earlier Wednesday, the U.S. State Department [announced](#) that it was offering \$100 million in humanitarian aid for Cuba to be distributed through the Catholic Church and other independent organizations rather than the Cuban state, while accusing the Cuban government of blocking the offer and earlier U.S. assistance proposals. Secretary of State Marco Rubio also reaffirmed a standing U.S. offer of free satellite internet access to Cuba, which reports have suggested would be provided by Elon Musk’s Starlink. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla said the public offer was the first time Cuban authorities had heard about the assistance and expressed the country’s willingness to hear the details of the proposal but insisted that the best aid would be an end to the hardened blockade.

- **At least 61 killed in South Kordofan, according to Sudan Doctors Network:** At least 61 people—including nine children and five women—were [killed](#) in clashes between the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North and the Atoro tribe in Kauda, South Kordofan, the Sudan Doctors Network reported Wednesday. The SPLM-N acknowledged launching attacks

on May 8, framing them as a pursuit of “rebels” following a dispute between the Atoro and Shaway tribes over their tribal boundary markers. Survivor testimonies indicate that the SPLM-N directly and indiscriminately targeted civilians. SPLM-N forces are also accused of extrajudicial killings, slaughter, burning of homes and shops, and widespread looting in the region on Wednesday, with villages around Kauda subjected to systematic burning.

- **Russia strikes Kyiv with drones and missiles:** Russia [attacked](#) Kyiv with drones and missiles early Thursday, killing at least three people and injuring 40 others, including two children, Reuters reported. Damage was reported across at least 20 locations within and in the vicinity of the city, including a fire in a 12-story apartment block in a northern suburb.

- **Russia places former British Defense Minister on wanted list on terrorism-related charges:** Russia’s Interior Ministry has [placed](#) former British Defense Secretary Ben Wallace on its wanted list in connection with an unspecified criminal investigation, with an unnamed law enforcement source cited by state news agency TASS linking the charges to terrorism, Al Jazeera reported Wednesday. Wallace served as defense minister from 2019 until August 2023 and has continued to advocate military support for Ukraine, including publicly calling in October 2025 for strikes on the bridge linking southern Russia to Crimea.

- **Gunshots at Philippine Senate as police move to arrest senator:** Gunshots [were fired](#) at the Philippine Senate on Wednesday evening as police and marines moved to arrest Sen. Ronald dela Rosa—former national police chief and top enforcer of ex-President Rodrigo Duterte’s drug war—who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on suspicion of crimes against humanity, Al Jazeera reported. Dela Rosa had earlier urged supporters to come to the legislature to prevent his transfer to The Hague, where Duterte is already awaiting trial following his arrest last year.

- **French authorities investigate Israeli firm BlackCore over alleged disinformation campaign targeting left-wing candidates:** French intelligence agencies are [investigating](#) whether an obscure Israeli firm called BlackCore carried out a foreign interference campaign targeting three La France Insoumise candidates ahead of March’s municipal elections. The firm reportedly designed deceptive websites, fake social media accounts alleging criminal behavior, and disparaging digital ads against candidates in Marseille, Toulouse, and Roubaix, Reuters reported Wednesday. BlackCore’s website and LinkedIn page, where it described itself as “an elite influence, cyber, and technology company built for the modern era of information warfare,” were taken offline after Reuters sought comment.

- **Maldives jails two journalists for reporting on president’s affair:** Two journalists from the Maldivian news website Adhadhu—Mohamed Shahzan and Leevan Ali Nasir—were [jailed](#) on Tuesday for violating a court-ordered gag order and reporting on a documentary

alleging the country's president, Mohamed Muizzu, had an affair with a former aide. Their trials were conducted in secret and concluded within hours, with the journalists given just two hours to find legal counsel and no opportunity to present a defense. Two Adhadhu editors additionally face charges of "qazf"—the false accusation of adultery under Islamic law, carrying up to 80 lashes—with their trial opening behind closed doors Wednesday. The International Federation of Journalists and the Committee to Protect Journalists condemned the arrests as a "punitive attempt to criminalise investigative journalism."

· **SDF commander reveals planned trip to Ankara and possible meeting with Ocalan:** Syrian Democratic Forces commander-in-chief Mazlum Kobane [revealed](#) in a Wednesday interview with Al Monitor that he is planning a trip to Ankara, and that a meeting with imprisoned Kurdistan Workers Party leader Abdullah Ocalan may be on that trip's agenda. He also addressed the integration of the Kurds into the Syrian state, saying that four of his SDF-staffed military brigades are now formally recognized as part of the Syrian army, that roughly 50,000 autonomous administration employees are set to retain their positions and receive state salaries, and agreement is near on recognition of Kurdish school diplomas. Kobane criticized the United States for unexpectedly pivoting toward Damascus and not standing with its former allies, and said that additional funding for the SDF from the U.S. remains "under discussion."

· **Ghana to evacuate 300 citizens from South Africa amid wave of xenophobic attacks on migrants:** Ghana will [evacuate](#) 300 citizens from South Africa following a wave of xenophobic attacks targeting migrants from other sub-Saharan African countries, Foreign Minister Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa announced Wednesday. South African authorities have condemned the violence and vowed to crack down on attacks on immigrants. Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe have also warned their citizens in South Africa to exercise caution and stay indoors.

· **Brazilian markets tumble as report links presidential contender Flávio Bolsonaro to jailed banker:** Brazilian financial markets [fell](#) sharply on Wednesday after the Intercept Brasil reported that Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, a leading presidential contender, had negotiated a \$24 million deal with jailed banker Daniel Vorcaro to finance a film about his father. Vorcaro—who was arrested in March on bribery charges—was the owner of the failed Banco Master, which was ordered liquidated in November by the country's central bank. The real fell more than 2%, and the Bovespa stock index closed 1.8% lower than the previous day. Bolsonaro has been polling roughly even with current President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ahead of October's election.