

Nine Palestinians killed in Gaza as only five critical patients allowed to leave via Rafah crossing; Costa Rica's right wing sweeps election; Trump calls for nationalized elections

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The Gaza Genocide, West Bank, and Israel

- **Casualty counts:** At least three Palestinians were killed and 15 were injured in Israeli attacks over the past 24 hours, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The total recorded death toll since October 7, 2023 is now 71,803 killed, with 171,570 injured. Since October 11, the first full day of the ceasefire, Israel has killed at least 529 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded 1,462, while 717 bodies have been recovered from under the rubble, according to the Ministry of Health.
- **Israeli attacks kill Palestinians across Gaza:** Nine Palestinians were killed and others wounded on Monday in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip, including four shot dead near the so-called Yellow Line in northern Gaza, two killed in airstrikes on a funeral tent in Al-Nuseirat Camp, and additional deaths from drone and naval attacks in Jabalia and south of Khan Younis. Among those killed were Ahmed Ayman Mahmoud Khamis, 40, shot in the Mawasi area of Khan Younis, and Iyad Ahmed Naim Al-Rabaya, 3, killed when Israeli naval shelling struck tents for displaced families, as Israeli forces also opened fire in multiple areas across central and southern Gaza. Israeli troops also shot and killed a 19-year-old Palestinian man, Ahmed Abdel-Al, south of Khan Younis on Tuesday as Israel's deadly attacks on civilians in Gaza continue on an almost daily basis.
- **Rafah crossing partial reopening:** Dozens of Palestinians in Gaza seeking urgent medical treatment made their way to the Rafah crossing on Tuesday, though it remains unclear how many Israel will allow to cross into Egypt. On Monday, on the first day of the border reopening, only a small fraction of Palestinians were allowed to cross each way in a process that was marred by harassment and delays of more than 10 hours. Only five Palestinian patients in critical condition were permitted to leave Gaza on Monday, along with two companions each. About 20,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including 4,500 children, need urgent medical evacuation, according to Gaza authorities. Meanwhile, a total of 12 Palestinians, nine women and three children, were allowed to cross from Egypt back into Gaza on

Monday. In accounts posted online, returnees described being transferred by an armed militia to Israeli checkpoints and subjected to hours-long interrogations, threats, and confiscation of personal belongings. An Israeli security source confirmed to Haaretz that members of the Abu Shabab militia escorted civilians from Rafah to the Israeli inspection point. One woman, Sabah al-Raqab, said Abu Shabab gunmen beat, humiliated, strip-searched, handcuffed, and threatened women with arrest and death.

- **Israeli forces shoot man in Qalqilya, raid villages near Ramallah:** A Palestinian man is in critical condition after being shot by Israeli forces in the city of Qalqilya and transferred to Darwish Nazzal Governmental Hospital, according to Wafa, which said the circumstances of the shooting remain unclear. Israeli forces also raided villages northeast of Ramallah—including Al-Mughayir, Kafr Malik, and Burqa—firing sound bombs during the incursions; one young man was briefly detained in Al-Mughayir and later released, with no injuries or arrests reported elsewhere, Wafa said.
- **Israel holds hundreds of Palestinian bodies:** Israel is currently holding the bodies of 766 identified Palestinians and 10 foreign nationals, including 373 seized since October 7, 2023, according to figures cited by Jerusalem Legal Aid and Human Rights Center and reported by Haaretz. The total includes 88 detainees who died in Israeli custody—due to deteriorating prison conditions, medical neglect, or direct violence—only two of whom were ever convicted. The group also says that 256 bodies are buried in unnamed “numbered graves” and hundreds more are stored in military morgues.
- **U.S. contractor pitched Gaza plan with massive profits:** A U.S. disaster response firm proposed a plan to White House officials that would grant it a seven-year monopoly over Gaza trucking and logistics and guarantee returns of at least 300%, according to documents obtained by The Guardian. The proposal by The Gothams LLC, tied to President Donald Trump’s proposed “Board of Peace” for Gaza, would allow the company to charge fees on every truck entering the Strip and control warehousing and distribution while locking in exclusivity. Despite public claims by the firm’s chief executive that the bid was paused, a partner has continued discussions with White House officials, as legal experts described the projected margins as unprecedented, The Guardian reported.
- **Barak warned of a one-state future in 2013 conversation with Epstein and Summers:** In a 2013 discussion with Jeffrey Epstein and Larry Summers, former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak warned that Israel was sliding toward a one-state reality with an Arab majority. Barak proposed selective mass conversions of Palestinians to Judaism to preserve demographic control, referring to the policy as maintaining “quality,” as he contrasted the idea with Israel’s earlier acceptance of Jewish communities from Arab and African countries.
- **Released Palestinian prisoner dies after detention:** Released Palestinian prisoner Khaled Al-Sayfi, from Dheisheh Refugee Camp, has died a week after his release from Israeli prisons in critical condition, according to Shehab News. The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem has recently documented systematic abuse of Palestinian prisoners in these facilities by means of starvation, denial of medical care, extreme overcrowding, prolonged shackling, physical and psychological violence, and sexual abuse. B’Tselem reported that 84

Palestinians—including one minor—have died in Israeli custody since October 2023, with most bodies still being withheld by Israeli authorities.

U.S. News

- **Trump calls for nationalizing U.S. elections:** President Donald Trump said Monday that Republicans should “nationalize” elections, repeating false claims of widespread voter fraud in the 2020 presidential race during an appearance on former FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino’s podcast. The remarks came days after an FBI raid on an elections office outside Atlanta, which Trump mentioned while again asserting—without evidence—that he won the 2020 election in a “landslide,” despite audits, recounts, and court challenges. Trump’s comments revive earlier threats to federalize election administration—contrary to states’ constitutional authority—and follows Justice Department lawsuits seeking access to state voter rolls.
- **Trump says U.S. is close to Cuba agreement:** President Donald Trump said the United States is “pretty close” to an agreement with Cuba, telling reporters that Washington is dealing with Cuban leaders, even as Havana says no formal talks are underway. Cuba’s Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío told Reuters that the two sides are exchanging messages through diplomatic channels but have not entered a structured dialogue, adding that Cuba is ready for “serious, meaningful and responsible” talks.
- **DHS expands body cameras after Minneapolis shootings:** The Department of Homeland Security said Monday it will immediately issue body-worn cameras to all Homeland Security officers operating in Minneapolis and expand the program nationwide as funding allows, following the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens by federal agents, according to the Associated Press. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced the move amid mounting scrutiny and protests after video evidence contradicted initial administration claims about the killing of ICU nurse Alex Petti, and after the Department of Justice opened a civil rights investigation into his death.
- **DHS labels Portland protester as Antifa leader:** The Department of Homeland Security internally labeled Chandler Patey, a 29-year-old Portland-area protester accused of no crime, as the “leader of Antifa in Portland, OR,” according to leaked intelligence documents reviewed by journalist Ken Klippenstein. The records show DHS used its Intelligence Reporting System to collect and store extensive personal data on Patey and other protesters—largely from open-source material amplified by right-wing media—despite public denials that it maintains a domestic terrorist database. Read Ken Klippenstein’s full report [here](#).
- **Drop Site’s Julian Andreone asks congresspeople about Epstein’s ties to intelligence:**
 - **Andreone asked Rep. Byron Donalds**, a leading contender for Florida governor, if he thinks Jeffrey Epstein had ties to any intelligence agencies. [His response is here](#).
 - **Sen. Elizabeth Warren** responds to Andreone’s question about Jeffrey Epstein’s ties to intelligence agencies. “This is the problem — nobody knows where the edges of

the Jeffrey Epstein corruption scandal is,” Warren said. Congress must first see the full, unredacted files, “and then it’s time to start the hearings,” she added. [Full video here](#).

- **Rep. Jared Moskowitz (FL-23)**, a vocal Israel supporter, says Epstein’s potential intelligence ties should be investigated, though he deflects, pointing instead to his concerns about Epstein’s connections with Russia and the British royal family. [Full response here](#).
- **SEC moves to revive risky mortgage securities**: Amid bank lobbying and President Donald Trump’s deregulatory push, the Securities and Exchange Commission has solicited feedback on rolling back disclosure rules to revive the residential mortgage-backed securities market, a core driver of the 2008 financial crisis. Lobbying groups for major banks spent more than \$10.3 million last year pressing regulators as the prospects of adjustable-rate and other subprime-style mortgages have begun to entice Wall Street Traders again. The full report on “2008 2.0” is available at The Lever, [here](#).
- **U.S. advances Sudan peace plan via Board of Peace**: U.S. diplomats told the Sudan Tribune that Washington is finalizing a plan to end Sudan’s war by the end of March made through efforts by President Donald Trump’s newly created Board of Peace. The plan reportedly seeks to halt the fighting while advancing military and security reform and excluding Islamist groups, with backing from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates.

Democratic Republic of Congo

- **Explosive drones target Kisangani airport**: Eight explosive-laden drones targeted Bangoka International Airport serving the northeastern DRC city of Kisangani over the weekend, local authorities said, blaming the AFC/M23 rebel group and neighboring Rwanda, an allegation Kigali did not immediately respond to... Provincial officials said the “kamikaze drones,” carrying non-conventional sub-munitions, were shot down before reaching the airport, causing no casualties or damage, in what would mark the westernmost strike by AFC/M23 amid its ongoing offensive in eastern Congo.
- **DRC signs economic agreement with United Arab Emirates**: President Félix Tshisekedi arrived in Abu Dhabi on Monday to sign what Kinshasa called a “historic” comprehensive economic agreement with the United Arab Emirates after two years of negotiations, Radio France Internationale reported. The more than 100-page deal centers on Congolese gold, with officials saying it aims to curb illicit exports—much of which Kinshasa says is smuggled through Rwanda to the UAE—and to reclaim economic sovereignty amid the war in eastern Congo. The DRC holds an estimated 750 tons of proven gold reserves and produces about 40 tons annually, though much is mined artisanally and believed to leave the country outside official channels.
- **UN to deploy ceasefire monitors in eastern Congo**: The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo will send its first team in the

coming days to monitor a ceasefire between Congo's government and the AFC/M23 rebel group, following talks hosted by Qatar in Doha, Reuters reported. Qatar said the team will deploy to Uvira, a strategic eastern city recaptured by Congolese forces last month, after the sides agreed on detailed terms for a ceasefire monitoring mechanism under accords reached in October and November.

Other International News

- **U.S. and Iran plan first talks since war:** White House Envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi are expected to meet Friday in Istanbul, alongside representatives from several Arab and Muslim countries, to discuss a possible nuclear deal, according to U.S. and regional sources. The meeting would mark the first direct U.S.–Iran engagement since last June's collapse of talks and the subsequent 12-day war, as President Trump pushes for a swift agreement amid a major U.S. military buildup in the Gulf. The talks, driven by mediation from Turkey, Egypt, and Qatar, face a core impasse over U.S. demands that any deal address Iran's missile program and regional proxies, which Tehran has said are off the table.
- **Costa Rica's right wing sweeps election:** Costa Rican President-elect Laura Fernandez's decisive win handed her right-wing Sovereign People's Party (PPSO) a majority in Congress, securing 31 of 57 seats—the first time since 1990 that one party controls both the presidency and legislature, Reuters reported. The PPSO fell short of the 38-seat supermajority, meaning it can pass laws and budgets but must negotiate for reforms requiring broader support, as opposition parties regroup after heavy losses.
- **Epstein files expose close relation between Jeffrey Epstein and Lord Peter Mandelson:** The latest Epstein files pose a threat to UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's beleaguered leadership following revelations about the relationship between Jeffrey Epstein and Lord Peter Mandelson. Starmer appointed Mandelson as the UK's Ambassador to the US in December 2024 before dismissing him in September 2025. Bank statements reportedly show that Epstein paid \$75,000 to Mandelson in 2003 and 2004 while he was an MP, and a further £10,000 to Mandelson's husband in 2010 for tuition fees. Mandelson is accused of sharing market-sensitive information with Epstein while serving in Cabinet: advance notice of a €500bn bailout of the Euro and notes of a meeting between British Chancellor Alastair Darling and US Treasury Secretary Larry Summers about banking regulations. Mandelson has since resigned from the Labour Party. The revelation may also mean greater scrutiny for Morgan McSweeney, Starmer's Chief of Staff, who shared a long relationship with Mandelson and has been reported to be key to his appointment.
- **Syrian forces enter Qamishli under ceasefire deal:** Syrian government forces began entering the northeastern city of Qamishli on Tuesday to assume security duties under a ceasefire agreement with Kurdish-led forces, Syria's state news agency SANA reported, citing the country's Interior Ministry. The move follows a deal in which the Syrian Democratic Forces agreed to integrate into Syrian state institutions after weeks of clashes, as

President Ahmed al-Sharaa's government seeks to consolidate control following the fall of longtime leader Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

- **Kordofan crisis deepens in Sudan:** Civilians in Sudan's Kordofan region are facing starvation, bombardment, and mass displacement, Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, said after visiting South Kordofan, warning the world is “once again failing civilians” in the country. In Kadugli, all major supply routes have been cut, markets have collapsed, and famine conditions have taken hold, while more than 88,000 people were displaced across Kordofan between Oct. 25 and Jan. 15, according to the International Organization for Migration, adding to more than one million internally displaced already in the region. With no United Nations presence remaining in Kadugli and most international aid groups scaled back, local responders are operating under fire as a vast funding gap persists, with 62% of humanitarian needs unfunded in 2025 and only limited support expected in 2026, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.
- **French judges issue warrants over Gaza aid obstruction:** French judges have issued arrest warrants for two French-Israeli women living in Israel, accusing them of obstructing humanitarian aid to Gaza in acts authorities say amount to “complicity in genocide” and “incitement to genocide,” Le Monde reported. The warrants target Nili Kupfer-Naouri, president of France-based right-wing Zionist organization Israel Is Forever, and Rachel Tuito, a spokesperson for Tzav 9, whom investigators allege led or joined repeated efforts between January 2024 and May 2025 to block aid trucks at Kerem Shalom and Nitzana crossings. The allegations further claim that they and publicly incited others to prevent food, medicine, and fuel from reaching Gaza during famine conditions. Kupfer-Naouri rejected the warrants as “antisemitic persecution” and said she has no intention of entering French custody.
- **Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon:** One person was killed and at least eight others wounded on Monday in Israeli drone strikes on Ansariyeh and Qleileh in southern Lebanon, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. An Israeli drone struck a car near Phoenicia University on the Zahrani–Tyre road, triggering a traffic accident that injured two people, Al Jazeera reported, while Israel said it killed an individual in Ansariyeh allegedly involved in “developing infrastructure” for Hezbollah.

More from Drop Site

- **U.S. embassy suppressed Gaza conditions report:** U.S. envoys declined to transmit a February 2024 report describing “apocalyptic” conditions in northern Gaza after the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem said the assessment “lacked balance.” Exclusive photos from a United Nations fact-finding trip reviewed by Drop Site provide visual evidence of the humanitarian conditions that were omitted from official U.S. reporting. **Report from Jonathan Whittall here.**