

# AIPAC faceplants in New Jersey; U.S. strikes another boat in the Pacific; Cuba on the brink

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## Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel

- Israel kills 3 Palestinians in Gaza: Israeli forces killed at least three Palestinians across Gaza on Friday as bombardment, live fire, and large-scale demolitions continued nearly four months into the so-called ceasefire, according to Al Jazeera. Two Palestinians were killed in northern Gaza, one in Jabaliya al-Balad and another near the “yellow line” in Beit Lahia, while a third was shot in Bani Suheila, east of Khan Younis. In southern Gaza, Israeli airstrikes destroyed a four-story home in a Khan Younis refugee camp, damaging dozens of nearby houses and displacement tents and injuring at least one person. Israeli forces also carried out widespread demolition operations east of the city. Helicopter gunships opened fire on northern and eastern Gaza, while Israeli vehicles fired heavily in Rafah and strikes hit areas east of Deir al-Balah.
- U.S. uses chartered private jets to deport Palestinian men to the occupied West Bank: The Trump administration has secretly [deported](#) Palestinian men arrested by ICE to the occupied West Bank by private jet in coordination with Israeli authorities on at least two occasions, according to investigations by The Guardian and +972 Magazine. The detainees were flown in shackles to Tel Aviv and later released at an Israeli military checkpoint in the West Bank. According to the report, the flights took place on a luxury jet chartered by ICE that is owned by Florida developer Gil Deze, a Trump donor, friend of Donald Trump Jr., and a member of the Miami branch of Friends of the Israel Defense Forces.
- Palestinian journalist arrested in the West Bank: Israeli forces arrested journalist Bushra Al-Tawil yesterday at the Ain Sinya checkpoint north of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank on Thursday night. Al-Taweel has been imprisoned several times by Israeli authorities and has spent a total of over five years behind bars. She was last released in January 2025 as part of the first prisoner exchange in the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.
- Global Sumud Flotilla announces March convoy: The Global Sumud Flotilla [announced](#) it will launch another convoy for Gaza on March 29, 2026, with a maritime flotilla and overland contingent departing simultaneously to confront Israel’s blockade. Organizers said the mission will mobilize thousands from more than 100 countries, including over 1,000 healthcare workers, engineers, educators, reconstruction teams, and investigators, who intend to document war crimes and highlight the extent of Israel’s environmental

destruction of the Strip. Last year, around 500 people took part in the Global Sumud Flotilla on some 50 boats which were all intercepted by Israel. Around 443 participants were detained and subjected to harassment and abuse in Israeli custody before being released.

- Dockworkers at Mediterranean ports stage day of action to block Israel shipments: Dockworkers in over 21 Mediterranean ports are carrying out coordinated actions on Friday to block arms shipments bound for Israel. Unions and port workers in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, and the Basque country are refusing to load, unload, or allow transit of military cargo destined for Israeli ports, including Ashdod and Haifa. The actions are being organized as a regional “day of action,” led in part by Italy’s USB union and Greek dockworkers’ unions, with workers monitoring shipping data to identify weapons cargo.

## U.S. News

- U.S. military kills two in latest vessel strike in the Pacific: The U.S. military conducted a strike against a boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean on Thursday, killing two people, according to U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). SOUTHCOM [posted](#) a video of the strike and said, “two narco-terrorists were killed during this action” without providing evidence. At least 128 people have been killed in nearly three dozen U.S. strikes on vessels in the Pacific and Caribbean since September.

- AIPAC faceplants as Bernie/AOC-backed challenger leads in campaign for Mikie Sherrill’s New Jersey congressional seat: Progressive organizer Analilia Mejia is narrowly [leading](#) former Rep. Tom Malinowski by about 500 votes in the crowded Democratic primary to succeed newly elected New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill, with provisional and mail-in ballots still uncounted. AIPAC’s super PAC, United Democracy Project, spent some \$2 million in ads against Malinowski—apparently to the benefit of the least Israel-friendly candidate in the race, Mejia, who was endorsed by Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ro Khanna. The winner will face Republican Joe Hathaway in a special election on April 16.

- DOJ files reveal years of contact between Apollo chief Marc Rowan and Jeffrey Epstein: Newly released emails [show](#) that Marc Rowan, the chief executive of Apollo Global Management and a Trump appointee to the Gaza “Board of Peace,” maintained extensive contact with Jeffrey Epstein, in which he consulted him on tax matters, shared documents from his firm, and discussed a potential \$19 million private jet sale. The disclosures undercut Apollo’s claims it never did business with Epstein and follow the resignation of co-founder Leon Black after revelations he paid Epstein more than \$150 million.

- Local police often declined to probe shootings by federal immigration: A [ProPublica investigation](#) found that state and local authorities failed to investigate at least half of

shootings by on-duty federal agents since September, frequently deferring their investigative capacities to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and effectively ending any chance to hold the officers accountable. “Residents have every right and should be demanding that, ‘Hey, state authorities, police, local police: Protect us. Arrest people who kill us, who batter us, who point guns at us and threaten and assault us without legal cause to do so,’” Craig Futterman, a law professor at the University of Chicago, told ProPublica.

- Justice Department moves to gut immigration appeals through interim final rule: Today, the United States Department of Justice is expected to publish an interim final rule in the Federal Register that transforms the Board of Immigration Appeals from a mandatory review body into a discretionary one, making summary dismissal the default outcome for most appeals. The rule slashes appeal deadlines, imposes simultaneous briefing (which means petitioners will have less time to respond to the government’s arguments), removes transcript reviews, and effectively makes immigration judges’ rulings final immediately. The Department justified the shift by citing a backlog of more than 200,000 cases, though advocates warn that the change will only clear the path for rapid deportations. Migrant Insider first broke the story and has published a full report on the rule change, which is available [here](#).

## **Africa Update**

*Courtesy of Drop Site Africa Correspondent Godfrey Olukya, highlighting the biggest stories on the continent this week.*

- Sudan

- Trump administration unveils Sudan peace plan: The Trump administration [said](#) it has finalized a comprehensive peace plan to end Sudan’s war and will seek approval first through the United Nations Security Council and then through President Donald Trump’s Board of Peace, with administration representative Massad Boulos reporting that the deal has the backing of the United States, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Boulos said the proposal centers on humanitarian access, civilian protection and return, a permanent ceasefire, a civilian-led political transition, and reconstruction funding. Boulos cited “promising remarks” from Sudanese army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and ongoing U.S. engagement with the Rapid Support Forces in support of the deal’s viability. Sudan’s formal embassy, however, has rejected any deal linked to Abu Dhabi.

- RSF drone strikes hit South Kordofan hospital for second straight day, killing at least 22: The Sudan Doctors Network [said](#) at least 22 people were killed and eight

wounded in a drone strike by the Rapid Support Forces on a hospital in Alkuweik in South Kordofan on Thursday. It marked the second consecutive day the town has been targeted by RSF drones.

- Aid reaches Kadugli after siege breaks, but famine and attacks continue: Trucks carrying humanitarian supplies [moved](#) toward Kadugli after the Sudanese Armed Forces reopened the road linking the city to Dilling, ending a two-year blockade imposed by the Rapid Support Forces and restoring overland access for the first time since 2024. Despite the breakthrough, an RSF drone strike killed 15 people at a medical center on February 4, and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification confirmed Kadugli remains in Phase 5 famine conditions, first recorded in late 2025.
- Famine-level malnutrition spreads in Sudan: The IFSPC also [said](#) acute malnutrition has surpassed famine thresholds in Um Baru and Kernoï in North Darfur, with December assessments showing 52.9% of children malnourished in Um Baru and 34% of children malnourished in Kernoï, following their displacement from El Fasher and continued fighting in the region. The IFSPC and its partner nutrition agencies [said](#) acute malnutrition in Sudan is projected to rise about 13.5% in 2026, increasing the number of children under 5 and pregnant women affected from roughly 3.7 million to nearly 4.2 million. They warned that severe acute malnutrition—the most life-threatening form—is also expected to grow to around 800,000 cases.
- Niger: The U.S. Embassy in Niger condemned this week’s attacks on Diori Hamani International Airport and a nearby military base in Niamey as a “terrorist assault,” warning the overnight attack endangered Nigerien civilians and critical infrastructure. The embassy reaffirmed U.S. opposition to violent extremism in the country, which continues to face attacks from armed groups, including the al-Qaeda-linked Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin, particularly in its western and southeastern regions.
- Malawi: Authorities in Malawi announced an outbreak of poliovirus (type 2) after routine environmental testing detected the virus at two sites in Blantyre, Health Secretary Dan Namarika said Saturday. The government, acting on guidance from the World Health Organization, is intensifying containment efforts and preparing supplementary vaccination campaigns to protect children from paralysis and halt its further spread.
- Morocco: Authorities in Morocco said heavy flooding forced the evacuation of 108,423 residents across four provinces this week, with the largest displacement in Ksar el-Kebir within Larache Province, according to the country’s Ministry of the Interior. The government has opened emergency shelters and expanded rescue operations as torrential rains continue to inundate northern regions of Morocco, aiming to limit damage and protect civilians.

- Nigeria: Authorities in Nigeria said the death toll from armed bandit attacks in Kwara State has risen from 75 to at least 170, with 35 women abducted and search efforts still underway for additional victims. Lawmaker Saidu Baba Ahmed said survivors are fleeing into surrounding bush areas, while former governor and ex–Senate president Bukola Saraki condemned the killings as a national disaster.
- South Sudan: The UK-based charity Save the Children [said](#) armed gangs looted and burned its field office and primary health care center in Walgak, Akobo County, forcing an indefinite suspension of services and evacuation of staff in South Sudan’s Jonglei State. The attack followed a government airstrike that destroyed a warehouse at a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders in Lankien and the looting of another MSF facility in Pieri, as escalating violence has displaced around 280,000 people across one of South Sudan’s most food-insecure regions.

### Other International News

- Cuba prepares national defense plan as U.S. pressure cuts fuel supplies: Miguel Díaz-Canel [said](#) he is open to dialogue with the United States but is activating a national “defense plan” as new U.S. measures choke off fuel deliveries, worsening shortages that are disrupting food distribution, hospitals, transport, and schools. Speaking on state television, Díaz-Canel said Cuba has not received oil from Venezuela since December and must prepare for escalation, as President Trump threatens sanctions on countries supplying fuel and claims the Cuban government is nearing collapse.
- UN chief warns of humanitarian collapse in Cuba as U.S. moves to block oil supplies: António Guterres warned that Cuba faces a potential humanitarian “collapse” as the United States moves to block oil deliveries, triggering widespread blackouts in Havana and surging food and transport costs (via [Al Jazeera](#)). UN officials urged dialogue and an end to the U.S. long-standing embargo on the country. President Miguel Díaz-Canel has accused the U.S. of trying to suffocate the economy. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum has sought ways to keep fuel flowing into the country and condemned Washington’s escalation.
- Iran–U.S. nuclear talks underway in Oman: Senior Iranian and U.S. officials have resumed indirect negotiations in Muscat, Oman today over Tehran’s nuclear program amid rising threats of military confrontation and U.S. troop deployments in the region. Iranian officials have clarified that negotiations currently in a second round remain limited to the nuclear file and will not expand to ballistic missile or regional issues, while the U.S. has previously exerted pressure for broader conditions.
- Israeli fire strikes multiple areas across southern and eastern Lebanon: The Israel Defense Forces [shelled](#) and shot at villages along the southern border of Lebanon on Thursday,

including Merkava tank fire near Yaroun and machine-gun fire toward the outskirts of Markaba. Israeli airstrikes also hit elevated areas around Hermel, as well as sites in Mahmoudiya and Wadi Barghaz, extending attacks from the south into Lebanon's northeastern highlands.

- Senior Russian intelligence general wounded in Moscow shooting: A senior official in Russia's military intelligence service was shot multiple times Friday in a residential building on Moscow's northwestern outskirts and hospitalized with injuries of unknown severity, according to a Russian government spokeswoman. The general, who serves in the main directorate of Russia's military general staff and has played a prominent role in the war in Ukraine, was previously placed under European Union sanctions over the 2018 nerve agent attack in Salisbury, England. An Uzbek man was jailed in January for the 2024 killing of another general, Igor Kirillov, in an explosion outside a block of flats in Moscow, an attack for which Ukraine's SBU intelligence claimed credit.

- Saudi Arabia pours billions into southern Yemen to sideline UAE and consolidate control: Saudi Arabia is spending billions to unify armed factions, pay salaries, and stabilize the areas of Yemen under the control of groups it backs, after the United Arab Emirates and its proxies were pushed out of the country, according to Reuters. Riyadh is also seeking to strengthen pressure on the Iran-aligned Houthi movement and reassert its regional influence. Saudi Arabia has reportedly signaled to its partners an openness to a future southern separatist state, and has effectively become the sole financial and political patron of Yemen's fractured anti-Houthi coalition. Saudi's total bill for salaries, other development projects and energy support to Yemen could exceed \$4 billion this year alone, two officials told [Reuters](#).

- At least 31 killed in Islamabad mosque bombing: At least 31 people were killed and more than 170 wounded in a suicide bomb attack on a Shia mosque on the outskirts of the Pakistani capital of Islamabad on Friday. The attacker opened fire on the mosque during Friday prayers and detonated a suicide bomb after guards challenged him as he made his way into the mosque compound, according to Reuters. Pakistani Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said the bomber had a history of traveling to Afghanistan and blamed India for sponsoring the assault, without providing evidence.

- Myanmar military-backed party sweeps sham election to entrench junta rule: The military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party won 739 of 1,025 seats in national and provincial assemblies in Myanmar, where heavily repressed elections run by the Union Election Commission took place over the course of the past few months. While 57 parties reportedly took part in the elections, the UEC dissolved Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, which won landslide victories in 2015 and 2020. U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, described the election as a "theatrical performance that has

exerted enormous pressure on the people of Myanmar to participate in what has been designed to dupe the international community.” According to ACLED, at least 93,300 people have died in the five-year conflict that followed the 2021 coup. Read a full write-up on the elections from The Diplomat [here](#).