

# An End In Sight?



CAROLYN COLE/LOS ANGELES TIMES/MCT  
Ten-year-old Marram and her brother Hamsa, 6, wait for the water to be turned on Thursday at the school where she and her family are staying in downtown Gaza City. Three and a half weeks into the conflict between Israeli and Hamas forces, water, food, and other basics are becoming more and more difficult.

## Gaza conflict

The death toll continues to mount on both sides of the Gaza conflict.

### Death totals

As of July 31, 7:00 GMT

Israeli civilians **3**

Israeli soldiers **56**

Palestinian militants **213**

Palestinian civilians **1,219**

688 men

345 children

186 women

Source: Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs  
Graphic: Melina Yingling © 2014 MCT

## Abbas Seeks Support For War Crimes Charges

BY KARIN LAUB AND JOHN HEILPRIN  
Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Nearly a month into Israel's fierce assault on Hamas in Gaza, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is facing mounting domestic pressure to seek war crimes charges against Israel at the International Criminal Court.

He has hesitated in the past because such a move would instantly put the Palestinians on a risky collision course with Israel. But with about 1,400 Palestinians killed in Gaza, according to health officials, Abbas has signaled he might move ahead — cautiously.

Palestinian officials said Thursday that Abbas asked all Palestinian political factions, including Hamas and the smaller group Islamic Jihad, to give their written consent to such a move. Different PLO factions signed up in a meeting in the West Bank earlier this week, while Abbas is still waiting for a response from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, they said.

In trying to make a case against Israel, Abbas could also expose Hamas, a bitter rival turned potential political partner, to war crimes prosecution because it has fired thousands of rockets from Gaza at Israeli communities over the years.

"This option is a double-edged sword," Abbas' Fatah movement wrote on its official Facebook page Thursday, saying he would only move ahead once he has the approval of Hamas.

In Geneva, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on Thursday accused both Israel and Hamas militants of violating the rules of war.

She said Hamas is violating international humanitarian law by "locating rockets within schools and hospitals, or even launching these rockets from densely populated areas." But she added that this does not absolve Israel from disregarding the same law.

## US, UN Announce Deal On 72-hour Gaza Cease-fire

BY IAN DEITCH AND IBRAHIM BARZAK  
Associated Press

JERUSALEM — Israel and Hamas have agreed to a 72-hour humanitarian cease-fire beginning Friday, during which time there will be negotiations on a more durable truce in the 24-day-old Gaza war, the United States and United Nations announced Thursday.

The announcement came hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to destroy Hamas' tunnel network "with or without a cease-fire" and as the Palestinian death toll soared past 1,400. There was no immediate Israeli comment on the announcement.

In a statement released in New Delhi where Secretary of State John Kerry is traveling, the U.S. and U.N. said they had gotten assurances that all parties to the conflict had agreed to an unconditional cease-fire. "This humanitarian cease-fire will commence at 8 a.m. local time on Friday, Aug. 1, 2014. It will last for a period of 72 hours unless extended. During this time the forces on the ground will remain in place," the statement said.

"We urge all parties to act with restraint until this humanitarian cease-fire begins, and to fully abide by their commitments during the cease-fire."

The statement said the cease-fire was critical to give civilians a much-needed reprieve from violence. During this period, civilians in Gaza will receive humanitarian relief and have time to bury the dead, take care of the injured and restock food supplies. The time also will be used to repair water and energy infrastructure.

At least four short humanitarian cease-fires have been announced since the conflict began, but each has been broken by renewed fighting. Earlier, the Israeli military said it was calling up an additional 16,000 reserve soldiers to pursue its campaign against the Islamic militants.

At least 1,441 Palestinians have been killed, three-quarters of them civilians, since hostilities began on July 8, according to Gaza health officials — surpassing the at least 1,410 Palestinians killed in Israel's last major invasion in 2009, according to Palestinian rights groups.

Israel says 56 soldiers, two Israeli civilians and a Thai agricultural worker have died — far more

than the 13 Israeli deaths in the previous campaign.

In Geneva, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay accused both Israel and Hamas militants of violating the rules of war.

She said Hamas is violating international humanitarian law by "locating rockets within schools and hospitals, or even launching these rockets from densely populated areas." But she added that this did not absolve Israel from disregarding the same law.

The Israeli government, she said, has defied international law by attacking civilian areas of Gaza such as schools, hospitals, homes and U.N. facilities. "None of this appears to me to be accidental," Pillay said. "They appear to be defying — deliberate defiance of — obligations that international law imposes on Israel."

Pillay also took aim at the U.S., Israel's main ally, for providing financial support for Israel's "Iron Dome" anti-rocket defense system. "No such protection has been provided to Gazans against the shelling," she said.

The Iron Dome system has been credited with saving countless lives as Hamas militants fired nearly 3,000 rockets at Israel since hostilities began.

At the United Nations, Israel's Ambassador Ron Prosor responded to criticism of his country, saying: "I think the international community should be very vocal in standing with Israel fighting terrorism today because if not, you will see it on your doorstep tomorrow."

Israel expanded what started as an aerial campaign against Hamas and widened it into a ground offensive on July 17. Since then, Israel says the campaign has concentrated on destroying cross-border tunnels militants constructed to carry out attacks inside Israeli territory and ending rocket attacks on its cities.

Israel says most of the 32 tunnels it uncovered have now been demolished and that getting rid of the remainder will take no more than a few days.

"We have neutralized dozens of terror tunnels and we are committed to complete this mission, with or without a cease-fire," Netanyahu said Thursday in televised remarks. "Therefore, I will not agree to any offer that does not allow the military to complete this important mission for the security of the people of Israel."

## CIA Spied On Senate, Internal Review Finds

BY KEN DILANIAN  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The CIA's insistence that it did not spy on its Senate overseers collapsed Thursday with the release of a stark report by the agency's internal watchdog documenting improper computer surveillance and obstructionist behavior by CIA officers.

Five agency employees — two lawyers and three computer specialists — improperly accessed Senate intelligence committee computers earlier this year in a dispute over interrogation documents, according to a summary of a CIA inspector general report describing the results of an internal investigation. Then, despite CIA Director John Brennan ordering a halt to that operation, the CIA's office of security began an unauthorized investigation that led it to review the emails of Senate staffers and search them for key words.

After Senate leaders learned about the intrusion in January and objected, the CIA made a criminal referral

to the Justice Department, alleging improper behavior by Senate staffers when they took the internal CIA review documents. That referral, CIA watchdog David Buckley found, was based on inaccurate information and was not justified.

Brennan also asked his agency's inspector general to examine whether the CIA committed wrongdoing. When internal investigators interviewed the three CIA computer specialists who helped access the Senate machines, they exhibited "a lack of candor," the IG report said, suggesting an attempt to cover up their actions.

Those internal conclusions prompted CIA Director Brennan to abandon months of defiance and defense of the agency and apologize to Senate Intelligence Committee leaders.

"The director said that wherever the investigation led, he would accept the findings and own up to them," said his spokesman, Dean Boyd.

Brennan has convened an internal accountability board chaired by former Sen. Evan

Bayh, D-Ind., to examine whether CIA officers should be disciplined. Furious Democrats demanded further investigation and a public accounting from Brennan. Sen. Mark Udall, D-Colo., called for the director's resignation, citing "a tremendous failure of leadership."

At issue is a search by agency officers for information gathered in the course of a Senate investigation into the CIA's interrogation techniques. The search involved a penetration of the Senate portion of a shared, classified computer network at a Northern Virginia facility that was being used to provide Senate aides access to millions of CIA documents.

The fruits of the Senate's yearslong inquiry — an unclassified summary of a lengthy and classified report on post 9/11 detentions and interrogations that accuses the CIA of misconduct — is expected to be made public soon. It is expected to renew criticism contending that the U.S. engaged in torture as it questioned terrorism suspects after the 2001 attacks.

## Congress Races To Finish VA, Hwy Bills

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress ran full-tilt into election-year gridlock over immigration Thursday and staggered toward a five-week summer break with no agreement in sight on legislation to cope with the influx of young immigrants flocking illegally to the United States.



Boehner

Prospects were considerably brighter for bipartisan measures to improve veterans' health care and prevent a cutoff in highway construction aid. Officials said both bills appeared likely to clear Congress by day's end, and that legislation to send Israel funds for its missile defense system might also pass.

But three months before midterm elections, the unbreakable dispute over immigration exposed longstanding differences inside Republican ranks, postponing the start of the House's vacation one day until Friday. And a new outburst of harsh partisan rhetoric between leading officials in both parties served as yet another reminder that after 18 months in office, the current Congress has little to show for its efforts apart from abysmally low public approval ratings.

House Speaker John Boehner accused Democrats of pursuing a "nutso scheme" of trying to seize on the border crisis to try and grant a path to citizenship to millions of immigrants living in the country illegally.

Despite the attack on Democrats, it was Republican unity that cracked first.

A few hours after Boehner spoke, Republicans abruptly canceled a vote on their own border security legislation, a \$659 million measure that also would make it easier to deport the children from Central America now flooding into the United States. They did so after a revolt by tea party-aligned GOP lawmakers, some of whom had conferred with Texas Sen. Ted Cruz the night before.

They argued that the leadership's offer of a vote on a companion bill, even if the legislation were approved, would fall short of reversing a 2012 administration policy under which 500,000 immigrants living in the country illegally have obtained work permits.

So chaotic was the day that after initially announcing the House had taken its last vote, Republicans abruptly reversed course and announced plans to reconvene on Friday for a possible vote on legislation related to border security and immigration — details yet to be determined.

## Argentina in default

For the second time in 13 years, Argentina has defaulted on its debt after officials failed to come to an agreement with the country's bondholders.

### Debt problems

• Group of creditors demanded payment of \$1.5 billion on bonds bought after the \$144 billion default in 2001

### At a glance

Population 43 million  
Industry Food processing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, textiles  
GDP per capita \$18,600  
GDP growth rate 3.5 percent  
Public debt 45.8 percent of GDP  
Unemployment 7.5 percent



NOTE: All figures for 2013  
Source: CIA World Factbook, ESRI

## Default Fuels Uncertainty In Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Stocks fell sharply in Argentina on Thursday as the country entered into economic uncertainty with its second default in 13 years, one forced upon it by New York hedge funds with the backing of U.S. courts.

The Merval stock index closed down more than 8 percent a day after Argentina walked away from talks in New York, where a court-appointed mediator led negotiations with U.S. hedge funds demanding some \$1.5 billion.

Economy Minister Axel Kicillof made it clear that Argentina and the holdout creditors remain far apart — he and other officials refuse to concede that the country is even legally in default. But he told reporters that he was nevertheless open to further talks involving a court-appointed mediator.

"We remain open to dialogue," Kicillof said. Argentine shares had rallied on Wednesday when a group of private Argentine bankers announced it would offer to buy up the disputed debt. Such a deal would have enabled Argentina to make a late interest payment owed to a separate group of bondholders, which would have allowed it to avoid default.

"The stock exchange is falling heavily because it was, in the end, surprised by the fact that negotiations yesterday were frustrated," said Belen Olait, an economist with ABCECB.com Consultants in Buenos Aires.

Olait said some investors may also have been spooked by Kicillof's sharp criticism of the hedge fund investors, raising worry the dispute is far from resolution. Speaking to reporters after the collapse of talks, Kicillof repeatedly referred to the investors as "vultures" and called their demands "extortion."

## Africa Ebola Outbreak Tops 700 Deaths

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) — The death toll from the worst recorded Ebola outbreak in history surpassed 700 in West Africa as security forces went house-to-house in Sierra Leone's capital Thursday looking for patients and others exposed to the disease.

Fears grew as the United States warned against travel to the three infected countries — Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia — and Sierra Leone's soccer team was blocked from boarding a plane in Nairobi, Kenya, that was to take them to the Seychelles for a game on Saturday. Airport authorities in Kenya said Seychelles immigration told them to prevent the team from traveling.

Almost half of the 57 new deaths reported by the World Health Organization occurred in Liberia, where two Americans, Dr. Kent Brantly of Texas and Nancy Writebol, a North Carolina-based missionary, are also sick with Ebola.

At the White House, press secretary Josh Earnest said the U.S. is looking into options to bring them back to the U.S. Officials at Atlanta's Emory University Hospital said they expected one of the Americans to be transferred there "within the next several days." The hospital declined to identify which aid worker, citing privacy laws.

Writebol is in stable but serious condition and is receiving an experimental treatment that doctors hope will better address her condition, according to a statement released by SIM, a Christian missions organization. Her husband, David, is close by but can only visit his wife through a window or dressed in a haz-mat suit, the statement said.

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