



Dozens missing in shipwreck during China Sea typhoon

Independent Algeria turns 60, but colonial-era wounds remain

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BUCHA, Ukraine: A woman takes a picture of a car destroyed during battles of early April 2022 in Bucha, Kyiv region on July 1, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Zelensky accuses Russia of terror

Missiles rain down on Ukraine, killing many civilians

**KYIV, Ukraine:** Missiles rained down on Ukraine killing many civilians and wounding dozens in built up areas as the weekend began, prompting President Volodymyr Zelensky to accuse Russia of state "terror".

Strikes on a southern resort town left 21 dead and dozens wounded after missiles slammed into flats and a recreation centre in Sergiyivka, 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Black Sea port Odessa. Rockets struck residential properties in Solviansk in the heart of the embattled Donbas region, killing a woman in her garden and wounding her husband, a neighbour told AFP Saturday, describing debris showered across the neighbourhood.

The witness said the strike on Friday was thought to use cluster munitions which spread over a large area before exploding, striking buildings and people who were outdoors. The attacks came after Moscow abandoned positions on a strategic island in a major setback to the Kremlin's invasion. Victims of the Sergiyivka attacks included a 12-year-old boy, Zelensky said in his daily address to the nation, adding that some 40 people have been injured and that the death toll could rise. "I emphasise: this is an act of deliberate, purposeful Russian terror—and not some kind of mistake or an accidental missile strike," Zelensky said.

"Three missiles hit a regular nine-storey apartment building, in which nobody was hiding any weapons, any

military equipment," he added. "Regular people, civilians, lived there."

### 'Cruel manner'

Germany swiftly condemned the violence. "The cruel manner in which the Russian aggressor takes the deaths of civilians in its stride and is again speaking of collateral damages is inhuman and cynical," said German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit.

The attacks follow global outrage earlier this week when a Russian strike destroyed a shopping centre in Kremenchuk, central Ukraine, killing at least 18 civilians. President Vladimir Putin has denied his forces were responsible for that attack and Moscow made no immediate comment on the Odessa strikes. On Friday, Zelensky hailed a new chapter in its relationship with the European Union, after Brussels recently granted Ukraine candidate status in Kyiv's push to join the 27-member bloc, even if membership is likely years away.

"Our journey to membership shouldn't take decades. We should make it down this road quickly," Zelensky told Ukraine's parliament. The president of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, addressing Ukrainian lawmakers by video link, said membership was "within reach" but urged them to work on anti-corruption reforms. Norway, which is not an EU member, on Friday announced \$1 billion worth

of aid for Kyiv including for reconstruction and weapons. And the Pentagon said it was sending a new armament package worth \$820 million, including two air defence systems and more ammunition for the Himars precision rocket launchers the United States began supplying last month.

### Soup spat

In a decision that further cooled relations between Kyiv and Moscow, the UN's cultural agency inscribed Ukraine's tradition of cooking borsch soup on its list of endangered cultural heritage. Ukraine considers the nourishing soup, usually made with beetroot, as a national dish although it is also widely consumed in Russia, other ex-Soviet countries and Poland.

UNESCO said the decision was approved after a fast-track process prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. We "will win both in the war of borsch and in this war," said Ukraine's Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko on Telegram. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said: "Hummus and pilaf are recognised as national dishes of several nations. Everything is subject to Ukrainisation."

### Phosphorus bombs

On Thursday, Russian troops abandoned their positions on Snake Island, which had become a symbol of Ukrainian

resistance in the first days of the war, and sat aside shipping lanes near Odessa's port. The Russian defence ministry described the retreat as "a gesture of goodwill" meant to demonstrate that Moscow will not interfere with UN efforts to organise protected grain exports from Ukraine. But on Friday evening, Kyiv accused Moscow of carrying out strikes using incendiary phosphorus munitions on the rocky outcrop, saying the Russians were unable to "respect even their own declarations". In peacetime, Ukraine is a major agricultural exporter, but Russia's invasion has damaged farmland and seen Ukraine's ports seized, razed or blockaded—sparking concerns about food shortages, particularly in poor countries.

Western powers have accused Putin of using the trapped harvest as a weapon to increase pressure on the international community, and Russia has been accused of stealing grain. Ukraine on Friday asked Turkey to detain a Russian-flagged cargo ship that Kyiv alleged had set off from the Kremlin-occupied port of Berdyansk.

While heavy fighting continued in eastern Ukraine, officials said schools in the Ukrainian capital would reopen at the start of the school year on September 1 for the first in-person classes since lessons went online after the invasion began. Olena Fidanyan, head of Kyiv's education and science department, said land around schools will be checked for explosives and school bomb shelters will be restocked with essentials. — AFP

## On the US border, 'migrants' desperation outweighs fear

**EAGLE PASS, United States:** Selvin Allende is worn out. With his one-year-old daughter on his shoulders and his pregnant wife beside him, he crossed the Rio Grande from the Mexican city of Piedras Negras into Eagle Pass, Texas—a dangerous journey that thousands of migrants undertake every year seeking a better future.

"I was afraid for my daughter in the river. I feel tired, defeated, but with the demand of working if the immigration services listen to us with their hearts," says the 30-year-old Guatemalan. The family left their home in Honduras because of crime and a lack of work, and made the long trip by train and on foot to get here.

He and his wife, walking with a painful gait and eyes half-closed, make their way over to the border patrol waiting for them under one of the bridges that link Mexico and the United States. Their belongings fit in a pair of plastic bags.

The agents look over their passports and those of other people who recently arrived, and take them into custody to study their asylum claims. The scene repeats itself several times a day under the resigned gaze of the security forces. "This never stops. They can cross wherever and whenever," said one National Guard soldier, who did not want to be named.

The reinforcement of security in the last few months has not stemmed the arrival of migrants without visas. In May, authorities detained more than 239,000 people on the Mexican border, a record, though the figure also includes those who tried to enter the US multiple times.

And yet, the journey comes with serious risks, as demonstrated by the case of 53 migrants found dead after being abandoned in a sweltering tractor trailer in San Antonio on Monday. The man suspected of driving the truck has said he was unaware the trailer's air conditioning had failed, according to media reports.

### 'Crying with happiness'

On the Mexican bank of the river trucks come and go, letting off people crossing to the other side. This afternoon the temperature hits 37 degrees Celsius (99 degrees Fahrenheit), and some migrants cool off in the water as they wait for more people to arrive with whom they can cross the treacherous river, which has claimed many lives. One Venezuelan family - five men, two



SAN ANTONIO, United States: Migrants wait in line outside a shelter in San Antonio, Texas. Dozens of migrants wait in line outside a shelter in San Antonio, most of them young men but also some women and children, hoping for a hot meal and a roof over their head. — AFP

women and two children - decide the moment has come. Their crossing lasts 10 minutes, and halfway through, they grab onto each other to brace themselves against the strong currents.

When they arrive on the American side, they shout with happiness before turning themselves over to the border patrol. The relief can be seen in every face. Alejandro Galindo, another Venezuelan crossing the river nearby, is emotional after 26 days of traveling with two companions. "I'm crying with happiness. I want to help my family. In Venezuela we have no future," the 28-year-old says.

### A changing profile

Eagle Pass, a city of 22,000 people about 230 kilometres (143 miles) from San Antonio, has learned to live with the daily presence of the migrants. A few meters from the bridge over the border, several men play golf in the yellowish grass, paying no mind to the people crossing the river. Valeria Wheeler, the director of the shelter Mission Border Hope, witnesses every day the challenges of the wave of migration. In two years, her facilities have gone from taking in between 20 migrants a week to up to 600 a day.

The recent arrivals spend a few hours there, in a

large warehouse with benches, bathrooms and showers, waiting for a relative to pay for their transportation to another city. The migrants' economic profile has changed in recent times, explains Wheeler, 35. Before, they were usually people who could buy an airplane ticket to somewhere near the border. But now they are poorer, and arrive after walking from Mexico or Central America. "They come with physical and emotional wounds," says Wheeler, whose shelter receives only those released by the border patrol and able to seek asylum after getting around Title 42.

The measure, invoked under the administration of former president Donald Trump, applies to all Mexicans and Central Americans, and allows for the deportation of migrants without visas, even if they are seeking asylum, under the pretext of stopping the spread of COVID-19.

For those who try to elude the border patrol and deportation, the journey is even more dangerous than for others. So-called coyotes, or traffickers, are one option, but the price can climb as high as \$10,000, and that's not the worst part, as seen in the case of the 53 people found dead in San Antonio.

"We're here so the people who arrive at the shelter don't have to go through the same thing," says Wheeler. "That's what we're working for." — AFP

## Iranian FM in Syria to calm Turkey tensions

**DAMASCUS:** Iran's foreign minister travelled Saturday to Damascus on what he said was a mission to calm tensions, after Turkey threatened to launch a new offensive on Kurds in northern Syria. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said his visit "was aimed at establishing peace and security in the region between Syria and Turkey", according to Iran's official news agency IRNA.

Iran is a major ally of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and an important trading partner for Turkey. Turkey has launched a string of offensives in Syria since 2016 targeting Kurdish militias as well as Islamic State group jihadists and forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said earlier this year he wanted to encourage one million Syrian refugees to return to their country by building their housing and local infrastructure in their homeland. In recent weeks, Erdogan said he planned to launch a military offensive against Kurdish fighters in Syria waging an insurgency against his country.

These include the US-backed Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which formed a crucial part of an international coalition against the Islamic State group. Amir-Abdollahian's trip to Syria comes five days after he visited Turkey. "After my visit to Turkey... it is necessary to have consultations with the Syrian authorities," Amir-Abdollahian was quoted as saying on Saturday by IRNA.

On Monday Amir-Abdollahian said he understood the need for a new Turkish military operation against Kurdish fighters in northern Syria. "We understand Turkey's security concerns very well," he told a joint news conference in Ankara with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. "We understand that... maybe a special operation might be needed," he said, adding that "Turkey's security concerns must be addressed fully and permanently."

Iran is hostile to Kurdish separatists who carry out operations in both Turkey and Iran. Following the 2011 start anti-government protests in Syria, which devolved into civil war after they were brutally repressed by Damascus, Ankara supported the uprising against Assad as well as armed rebels. Turkey has also launched several military offensives along the border, targeting Kurdish-administered zones in northeastern Syria, where groups it considers terrorists are based.—AFP