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NABLUS, Palestinian Territories: Mourners carry the bodies of Muhamad Azizi, 25, and Abdul Rahman Jamal Suleiman Sobh, 28, killed earlier in Zionist attacks in the old quarter of the West Bank city of Nablus, during their funeral procession in the same city, on July 24, 2022. — AFP

# Two Palestinians killed in Zionist raid

## Zionist forces have launched near-daily operations in West Bank

NABLUS, Palestinian Territories: Zionist forces killed two Palestinians during an overnight raid in the occupied West Bank, officials on the two sides said Sunday, in what Zionist entity described as a shootout with gunmen. The Zionist army said it carried out operations and used live fire in several locations, including in Nablus, adding it arrested four "individuals suspected of involvement in terrorist activities".

The Zionist military claimed "hits" were identified against multiple "terrorists" and said there were no reported wounded on its own side.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the dead as Muhamad Azizi, 25, who it said was killed by a bullet to the chest, and Abdul Rahman Jamal Suleiman Sobh, 28, who was shot in the head. The Palestinian Red Crescent reported treating 19 wounded in Nablus, including 10



Youths killed in direct bullet hits

people hit by live fire.

Zionist security forces have launched near-daily operations in the West Bank following a spate of attacks in recent months. The Jewish state has occupied the West Bank since 1967. Zionist entity's Prime Minister Yair Lapid said those targeted in the overnight

raid were linked to recent "shooting attacks" on Zionists, and he commended the security forces for an "efficient and successful operation."

Nabil Abu Rudeina, a spokesman for Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, called the raid a "Zionist crime." "The entire region will remain in a cycle of violence until the occupation is ended and a just peace is achieved," he added in a statement to Voice of Palestine radio. The Zionist army said in a statement that its operation in Nablus was carried out alongside police, and that it also launched operations in several other locations including the town of Mughayir, Ayda camp and the city of Jenin.

It said the operation in Nablus was launched "to apprehend armed terrorist suspects". "An exchange of fire took place between the people and Zionist forces.

Hits on a number of targets were identified," it said.

The Zionist military alleged that a "violent riot was instigated" during the "operational activity". "The rioters hurled explosive devices and rocks and shot at... soldiers, endangering their lives," it said. "The soldiers responded with riot dispersal means and live fire."

The military also said it had operated alongside Zionist Border Police in the village of Qabatiya to "apprehend two... suspected of involvement in terrorist activities". "Armed suspects shot at the soldiers, who responded with live fire," it added.

At least 52 Palestinians have been killed since late March, mostly in the West Bank, among them and also non-combatants, including Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American dual national, who was covering a Zionist raid in Jenin. — AFP

## Evacuation alert after volcano erupts in Japan

TOKYO: Dozens of people were urged to evacuate their homes after a fiery volcanic eruption in southern Japan on Sunday as the national weather agency issued its top-level alert for the mountain.

Television footage showed red-hot rocks and dark plumes exploding from Sakurajima volcano in Kagoshima, which erupted just after 8 pm (1100 GMT). There were no immediate reports of damage, said deputy chief cabinet secretary Yoshihiko Isozaki.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has instructed the government "to work closely with the local municipality to ensure damage prevention, such as through evacuations," Isozaki told reporters.

The volcano frequently spits out smoke and ash, and is a major tourist attraction.

Sunday's blast propelled large cinders about 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) from the crater, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said, while the smoke reached around 300 meters and merged with the clouds. The agency raised its alert for Sakurajima to level five, the top level, which urges evacuations.

Previously it was at level three, which bans entry to the mountain.

The volcano saw four earlier eruptions between Saturday and Sunday afternoon, with the plume reaching as high as 1,200 meters. "Residential areas of Arimura town and Furusato town within three kilometres of the summit crater... of Sakurajima should be on high alert," Tsuyoshi Nakatsuji of JMA's Volcanic Observation Division told reporters.

According to Kagoshima City, there are 77 residents in the two towns. Nakatsuji said the JMA last week had observed the swelling of the volcano, which signals the accumulation of magma. "But the swelling hasn't been resolved after the latest eruption," he said.

"We'll carefully monitor this."

Japan has scores of active volcanoes and sits on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire" where a large proportion of the world's earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are recorded. Sakurajima was formerly an island, but due to previous eruptions is now attached to a peninsula. Japan last issued the top evacuation alert for a volcano when Kuchinoerabu island, also in Kagoshima, erupted in 2015. — AFP



MYKOLAIV, Ukraine: A Ukrainian soldier keeps position on the front line in Mykolaiv region on July 23, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Outgunned Ukraine troops face brutal fight to regain south

KYIV: In a devastated village near Ukraine's southern front line, the thud of incoming Russian artillery is a constant reminder of the hard battle ahead for Kyiv's troops in a planned major counter-offensive.

Signs of destruction are all around in the village, which was only liberated from Russian occupation after intense fighting. Almost every house has been leveled to the ground or badly damaged, there are burnt out cars, craters left by rockets and there is no sign of the people who once called the area home.

Now a small detachment of Ukrainian soldiers holds the position in sandbagged trenches and the wreckage of destroyed buildings, always alert to enemy drones in the air. A couple of dogs and a cat keep them company during the long, hot days of waiting.

"There are those who are afraid-but what can we do, we need to defend our homeland, because if I don't do it then my children will be forced to do it," said Stanislav, 49, who left his wife and two kids at home to volunteer to fight when Russia invaded. Kyiv has vowed to launch a counter-offensive to retake the strategic Kherson region and President Volodymyr Zelensky said Saturday that his forces were advancing "step by step".

For now, the troops at the position visited by AFP said Ukraine was doing well just to hold the front line. None doubted a push for Kherson city, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) away, would come eventually-even if the prospect looks brutal and Ukraine still needs more big guns and armored vehicles to make larger gains.

"We really don't have enough artillery here-if we fire eight times at them, they fire back 48 times. For now they have superiority in artillery," said Stanislav, who comes from the neighboring Odessa region. "But we are holding on."

### Key battleground

While Russia has thrown the bulk of its forces at the bloody onslaught in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, the battle for Kherson could prove a more defining fight in shaping the future of the war.

Kherson was the first region to fall to Moscow after it launched the invasion and retaking it would be a major symbolic and strategic victory for Ukraine. Capturing Kherson city, the region's capital, and the land around would expel Russian forces from prime territory north of its stronghold Crimea and cut off the Kremlin's chances of launching a future push westwards along the Black Sea coast to Odessa.

The looming battle will also be a key test of whether Ukrainian forces, equipped with new longer range weapons from the West, can ever hope to push back the Russians and liberate the whole of the country. Kyiv and Western intelligence have said Moscow is reinforcing its defenses in the south to try to stave off any offensive and Russian forces have stepped up strikes on the nearby city of Mykolaiv in an apparent attempt to stall any Ukrainian push. "We will liberate Kherson—that's for sure. We will not give it away to the Russians," said 45-year-old soldier Oleksandr, leaning his rifle against the edge of his trench. "We need to withstand and then destroy the enemy horde."

### 'We are ready'

Ukraine has unleashed some of its most prized Western weaponry against the Russian lines on the south. Kyiv's forces have used US-supplied HIMARS guided missile systems, which have a range of 80 kilometers, to destroy weapons stores, command posts and disrupt supply lines deeper in occupied territory. They have also pummeled a key bridge across the Dniepr river to Kherson city in a move that threatens to cut off the Russian troops deployed there. Soldier Alex said he wanted to see more HIMARS sent to the southern front-but Ukraine only has a handful to spread out along the whole of its more than 1,000-kilometre front line.

He insisted that either way, Ukraine's forces were prepared for any battle that lay ahead. "We are ready to counterattack," he said. — AFP

## Monkeypox outbreak can be contained, White House says

WASHINGTON: The White House said Sunday it was confident authorities could "eliminate" monkeypox from the United States by speeding up the rollout of vaccinations and treatment to combat the virus's spread. "I think monkeypox can be contained, absolutely," doctor Ashish Jha, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, told CBS News talk show "Face the Nation."

"We have acted swiftly," Jha said, pushing back against accusations that President Joe Biden's administration was caught flat-footed when the first cases began appearing in US states more than two months ago. He said Washington has undertaken a "very substantial" ramp-up of its response, including the recent acquisition of some 800,000 vaccine doses from Denmark, since the start of the US outbreak in May, when monkeypox vaccine stockpiles were limited.

"The plan is to eliminate this virus from the United States. I think we can do that," Jha said. The World Health Organization on Saturday declared the monkeypox outbreak a global health emergency, having affected nearly 17,000 people in 74 countries.

US lawmakers and mayors have complained of the Biden administration's response, including House Democrat Adam Schiff who wrote the country's health secretary this week to warn that "the federal government is falling short of the response that is needed."

The center of the US outbreak is New York City, where most of the recorded cases are in men who have sex with men. Jha acknowledged that the virus is spreading largely in the gay male community, but stressed that "there are other people who are at risk as well," particularly those who are in close personal contact with people who are infected.

The World Health Organization on Saturday declared the monkeypox outbreak, which has affected nearly 17,000 people in 74 countries, to be a global health emergency — the highest alarm it can sound. "I have decided that the global monkeypox outbreak represents a public health emergency of international concern," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a press conference.

He said a committee of experts who met on Thursday was unable to reach a consensus, so it fell to him to decide whether to trigger the highest alert possible. "WHO's assessment is that the risk of monkeypox is moderate globally and in all regions, except in the European region where we assess the risk as high," he added. Monkeypox has affected more than 16,800 people in 74 countries, according to a tally by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published on July 22. — AFP