

VOA NEWS

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Hi, I'm VOA's Alexis Strobe with your worldwide news update.

In a video statement, Chen Kugel, the chief of the Israeli National Institute of Forensic Medicine, confirmed on Saturday Shiri Bibas' body shows no evidence of injuries caused by bombing.

"We have identified the remains of Shiri Bibas two days after identifying her children, Ariel and Kfir. Our examination found no evidence of injuries caused by bombing."

Hamas, a U.S.-designated terror organization, said in November, 2023 that the children and their mother had been killed in an Israeli airstrike.

Ismail Al-Thawabta, director of the Hamas-run Gaza Government media office, said Netanyahu "bears full responsibility for killing her and her children."

But the Israeli military said intelligence assessments and forensic analysis of the bodies of the Bibas children indicated that they were deliberately killed by their captors. Chief military spokesperson Daniel Hagari said the boys were killed by the terrorists with their bare hands, but gave no details.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Israel said the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners is delayed until the release of the next hostages has been assured and without the humiliating ceremonies at handovers of Israeli captives in Gaza.

The statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office came early Sunday as vehicles apparently carrying prisoners left the open gates of Ofer Prison only to turn around and go back in. Israel's announcement abruptly put the future of the cease-fire into further doubt.

The Vatican says Pope Francis is in critical condition. AP correspondent Julie Walker reports.

The pope has been in the hospital for a week with a complex lung infection. The Vatican also said Saturday Francis had to get blood transfusions after tests showing an anemia-related condition.

The statement said the Holy Father continues to be alert and spent the day in an armchair, although in more pain than yesterday. At the moment, the prognosis is reserved.

I'm Julie Walker.

This is VOA News.

Germans are electing a new parliament Sunday after a campaign focused on the state of Europe's biggest economy and calls to curb migration. Uncertainty has grown rapidly about the future of Ukraine and the strength of Europe's alliance with the United States. VOA's Cristina Menenti has more.

The opposition leader and frontrunner Friedrich Merz vowed Saturday to revive the stagnant economy and defend Europe's interests in the face of a confrontational U.S. administration.

Meanwhile, hundreds protested for and against far-right Alternative for Germany's leader Alice Weidel in her Swiss town of residence. ??? is the co-organizer.

"We're really concerned about what's going on everywhere in Europe, about the rise of far-right movements."

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's center-left Social Democrats have shown little sign of coming back from a large poll deficit after the chancellor's three-party coalition collapsed in November. That led to the election being held seven months ahead of schedule.

Cristina Menenti, VOA News.

A federal judge has largely blocked sweeping executive orders from President Donald Trump that sought to end government support for programs promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. Judge Adam Abelson in Baltimore found that they likely violate free speech rights and granted an injunction blocking them as a lawsuit plays out.

The city of Baltimore and higher education groups sued, arguing the executive orders are unconstitutional and in overreach of presidential authority.

The Trump administration has argued that the president was targeting only DEI programs that violate federal civil rights laws.

Elon Musk is cutting jobs at the auto safety agency that oversees his Tesla company. AP correspondent Donna Warder reports.

Elon Musk's cost-cutting team, DOGE, is cutting jobs at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. That's the agency that oversees Tesla and has launched investigations into deadly crashes involving Tesla vehicles.

The NHTSA says the number of eliminated positions is modest.

The administration has mandated that Tesla and other automakers using self-driving technology report crash data on vehicles, a requirement that Musk has criticized.

He's accused the agency of holding back progress on self-driving technology with its investigations and recalls.

I'm Donna Warder.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday a knife attack that killed one and injured three in eastern France on Saturday was "Islamist terrorism" after France's anti-terrorism prosecutor's office confirmed it was investigating the case.

The PNAT prosecutor's office said in a statement a man attacked local police officers in the city of Mulhouse shouting "Allah Akbar" on Saturday afternoon. The prosecutor's office added a passerby was killed trying to intervene while three police officers were injured.

The prosecutor's office said the suspect has been arrested.

That wraps up this update, but the world and news never stop. For additional updates, visit our website. I'm Alexis Strobe, VOA News.