Published by the Jordan Press Foundation
www.jordantimes.com
500 Fils
Volume 49 | Number 15330

# THE JORDAN TIMES




**TALKS**

Agriculture minister, FAO chief discuss water scarcity, food security, climate challenges

2



**COMMERCE**

ACC One-Stop Shop processes 78,808 transactions in Q3

3



**AVAIATION**



RJ Airlines Joins IATA Aviation Symposium in Brussels

7

**FOOTBALL**

Faisali bounce back with commanding victory over Al Nahda

8

Friday-Saturday, October 16-17, 2026 | Jumada I 5-6 , 1448 Hijri



AFP photo

**This handout photo provided by the Saudi Press Agency on Wednesday shows the remains of a projectile on top of a damaged vehicle found by civil defence responders checking damages at an apartment building in Riyadh following a strike**

## Coalition says Houthis attacked King Khalid International Airport 20 times so far this month

AMMAN (JT) — The Coalition to Restore Legitimacy said on Thursday that the Houthi militia in Yemen has carried out 20 attacks on King Khalid International Airport since the start of the month.

At least 17 people have died and more than 330 have been injured in the attacks on the airport in Riyadh, spokesperson Maj. Gen. Turki Al Maliki told a press conference.

"These brutal terrorist attacks — including the brutal attack that took place during rush hour — do not merely target the Kingdom's airports; rather, they go beyond that to threaten the safety of travelers, including citizens, brothers, friend, and pilgrims to the Two Holy Mosques from all corners of the earth," Al Maliki said referring to the largest attack on the airport on Saturday, which killed 13 people.

A total of 19 people have been killed and 364 injured in Houthi attacks on airports across the Kingdom including Abha airport, Al Maliki said. "Targeting airports endangers the lives of thousands of civilian travellers," he said.

Continued on page 5

## UNHCR to expand cash assistance for Syrian refugees returning home — spokesperson

AMMAN (JT) — The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will expand its cash assistance programme for Syrian refugees voluntarily returning to Syria from October 18, offering an additional JD355 per family to cover transportation costs, UNHCR spokesperson in Jordan Youssef Taha said.

Taha told Al Mamlaka TV that the decision followed feedback from refugees who identified high transportation costs as a major obstacle to returning home.

Under the expanded assistance package, each returning individual registered with UNHCR will receive JD70, in addition to the JD355 family transportation allowance. The package also covers the transportation of personal belongings and furniture.

Eligible vulnerable families may receive an additional JD210 ($300), Taha said.

The supplementary grant is available to families that include persons with disabilities, people with severe medical conditions or children with special needs, as well as single-caregiver households and families with eight or more members.

UNHCR has also introduced arrangements allowing refugees living in the Zaatari and Azraq camps to sell their caravans through authorised companies before departure or return them in accordance with established procedures.

As of early October 2026, Jordan hosted 352,553 registered refugees and asylum seekers, including 329,720 Syrians, who accounted for 93.5 per cent of the total.

More than 232,000 registered Syrian refugees voluntarily returned from Jordan between December 8, 2024, and October 3, 2026.



UNHCR file photo

**Syrian children returning from school in the Zaatari refugee camp in the north-eastern city of Mafraq**

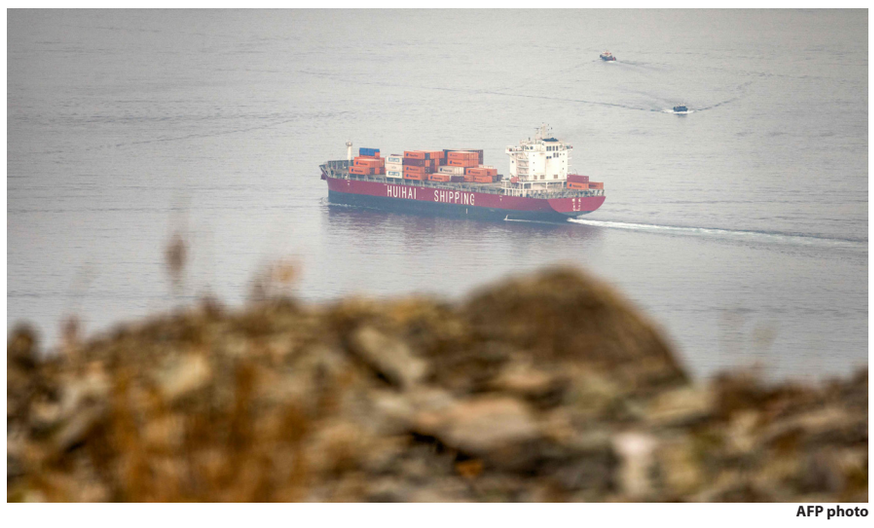
## Iran's military says oil tanker on fire in Gulf of Oman

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's military on Thursday said an oil tanker had caught fire in the Gulf of Oman as it was attempting to pass through an area deemed prohibited, according to state television.

"A few hours ago... surveillance teams of the army's navy identified a non-compliant oil tanker that had caught fire," state television cited a military statement as saying.

"The offending tanker had switched off its tracking systems and was attempting to pass through the prohibited zone," it added.

It was not immediately clear what caused the fire or who was responsible.




AFP photo

**The Chinese-flagged container shipping vessel Hui Fa transits the Gulf of Oman off the coast of Khor Fakkan in the emirate of Sharjah in the east of the UAE on Tuesday**

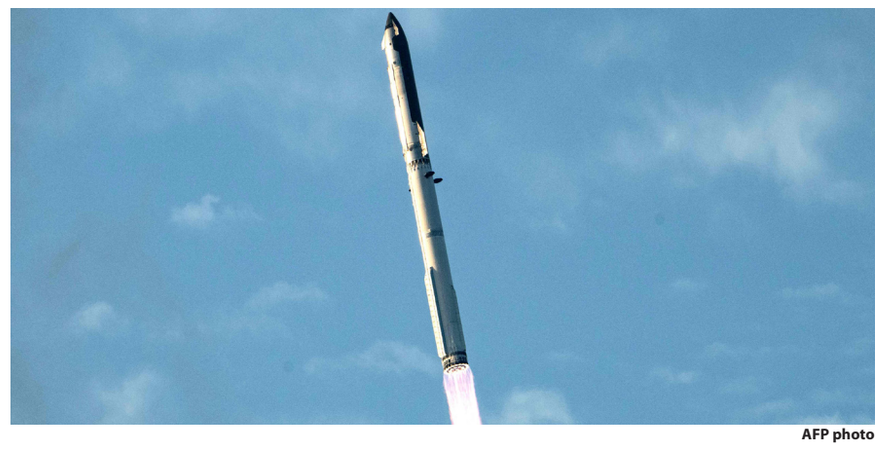
US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military operations in the region and is enforcing a blockade on Iranian ports, did not immediately comment.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard announced the boundaries of the prohibited zone in September, after security chief Mohsen Rezaei proposed the measure.

In an interview with state television at the time, Guard spokesman Hossein Mohebi said the zone would cover "part of the Sea of Oman and another part of the Arabian Sea, along the route that can lead to the Strait of Hormuz".

Tehran had said non-compliant vessels in the zone would face sanctions, without explicitly threatening military action against them.

Iranian naval forces have repeatedly targeted vessels they accused of using unauthorised routes through the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran has declared closed since the outbreak of war with the US in February.



AFP photo

**SpaceX Starship Flight 14 launches at SpaceX Starbase in Starbase, Texas on September 28**

## Musk suggests US govt behind any slowdown in Ukraine's Starshield system

WASHINGTON (AFP) — SpaceX boss Elon Musk said on Wednesday that any disruptions reported by Ukraine in using the Starshield satellite communications system would be the responsibility of the US government, not his company.

"Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government. Any limits on speed or usage are decided by the US military and ultimately POTUS," Musk said, referring to US President Donald Trump.

Continued on page 5

**CONFLICT**

## Palestinians fear violent olive harvest ahead of Israeli elections

**By Louis Baudoin/Laarman**
*Agence France-Presse*

BURQA, Palestinian Territories — With a black eye and a bandage covering his face, Palestinian farmer Abdellatif Bazzari looks out at his rows of olive trees that are half harvested before the season has even started.

Bazzari, who was injured in a raid on the fields by Israeli settlers that killed his cousin, is afraid to return to harvest the other half without some sort of army protection, fearing a new attack.

Like many olive farmers in the plains nestled between the occupied West Bank's sinuous limestone hills, Bazzari decided to harvest as early as possible this year, hoping both to save his crops and avoid beatings.

With Israel heading to elections on October 27, some farmers believe the violence will escalate as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, locked in a tight race, seeks to shore up his right-wing base.

"I think the prime minister of Israel is worried about the results of elections and he doesn't want to take any action against the settlers as he hopes to receive their votes," Bazzari told AFP.

"If he loses, things will get better," he hoped.

Olives are as important economically to Palestinians as they are a symbol of their attachment to the land, accounting for an estimated 15 per cent of the West Bank's agricultural GDP.

On October 7, a group of about 15 to 20 settlers raided the field where Bazzari and his family were picking olives by hand, beating them, before the army intervened and shot dead Bazzari's cousin Ali Bazzari, he said.

"My cousin bled to death right under this olive tree, irrigating the soil of Palestine with his blood," Bazzari said, pointing to a tree in the field.

### 'Don't go out'

Bazzari said the Israeli army, which had been dispatched to the site of the raid, an isolated field near the West Bank village of Burqa, kept the ambulance from reaching his cousin after he was shot.

During the confrontation between dozens of Palestinians and Israeli settlers, "a commander operating in the area identified a terrorist running toward him while carrying a suspicious object and neutralised him", it added.

Bazzari, like other West Bank Palestinians whom AFP spoke to, said danger areas for the olive harvest have grown in recent years as settlements multiplied and expanded.

"They don't want us to plant, to farm anything. They said, just stay in your village, cities, and don't go out," he said.

The olive harvest season, which lasts over a month, is a time for Palestinians to gather in fields, with family, friends and workers helping out for a process mostly done by hand.

Bazzari said settlers had stolen agricultural tools during their raid on his land, including ladders used to reach tree tops, rakes used to pick a whole branch's worth of olives at once, and tarps used to catch and gather the fallen olives.

More than 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, in settlements and outposts illegal under international law.

Netanyahu, who governs with the far-right, has ramped up approval of settlements. Settler attacks against Palestinians including beatings, vandalism and arson averaged six a day in the first half of the year, according to the United Nations.

Last week settlers beat up an AFP photographer who took pictures of the harvest, fracturing his ribs and stealing his camera.



AFP photo

**A Palestinian woman scoops a handful of olives at an olive tree field during the harvest season, near the controversial Israeli separation wall, in the village of Beit Awwa, west of Hebron City in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on Thursday**

### 'Tough on Palestinians'

Mahmoud Fatafta of the Palestinian Authority's agriculture ministry said his teams had recorded 300 incidents involving settlers and olives so far this autumn, even before the official start of the harvest on October 15.

Israeli rights group Yesh Din has reported 100 thefts, including settlers taking sacks of harvested olives during raids, or harvesting them directly from Palestinian lands.

In a report, Yesh Din said 25 per cent of all incidents occurred in the presence of the Israeli military.

It called the violence "not random, but part of an Israeli policy with a clear objective: To prevent the olive harvest in the West Bank, economically harm Palestinians, and drive them off their land".

Fatafta added that Israel's electoral calendar brought added impunity to settlers whom Palestinians already complained were unrestrained.

"Israeli parties want to show that they are tough on Palestinians, that they own the West Bank," he told AFP.



Petra photo

**Agriculture Minister Saeb Khreisat and Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation Qu Dongyu on Thursday in Rome discuss avenues to enhance cooperation in the agricultural and food sectors**

## Agriculture minister, FAO chief discuss water scarcity, food security, climate challenges

AMMAN (JT) — Agriculture Minister Saeb Khreisat and Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Qu Dongyu on Thursday discussed avenues to bolster cooperation in the agricultural and food sectors, supporting the Kingdom's endeavours to advance sustainable agri-food systems.

The meeting, held on the sidelines of the World Food Forum in Rome, focused on enhancing food security, improving agricultural output efficiency and tackling the sector's foremost challenges, namely water scarcity and climate change, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The two sides underscored the importance of sustaining the partnership between Jordan and FAO, as well as expanding collaboration across priority areas.

Such endeavours come in line with national plans aimed at achieving sustainable agricultural development and boosting the sector's resilience against environmental and economic hurdles.

Khreisat emphasised the imperative of advancing the Jordanian agricultural sector, boosting productivity, optimising water-use efficiency and adopting modern technological solutions.

He also underlined the significance of expanding economic opportunities for farmers and rural communities, while empowering women and youth to heighten their participation in productive agricultural activities.

The talks went over advancing the three Jordanian agricultural investment proposals submitted under the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

Both sides reviewed aspects to boost partnerships and investments geared towards improving produce marketing, cutting post-harvest losses, increasing value addition, and generating new employment opportunities to heighten the competitiveness of Jordanian produce in domestic and international markets.

The two officials highlighted the necessity of fostering innovation in the agrarian sector, expanding digital extension services and deploying modern technologies and artificial intelligence to refine farming practices.

These measures aim to optimise natural resource management and assist farmers in adapting to climate change impacts, particularly amidst the Kingdom's constrained water reserves.

The discussions reviewed the prospect of hosting an international exhibition dedicated to modern agricultural technologies and smart farming in Jordan in early 2027.

The two sides also addressed supporting initiatives designed to empower women and youth in agriculture, promote expertise sharing and leverage pertinent international programmes, notably the One Country One Priority Product initiative focusing on Jordanian dates, alongside the Green Cities Initiative.

They reiterated the importance of sustained coordination, aligning future cooperative frameworks with Jordan's agricultural and food priorities to secure sector sustainability, elevate farmers' living standards, expand investment prospects and fortify food security.

# WTTC honours former Jordanian tourism minister, UN Tourism chief Taleb Rifai



Photo courtesy of WTTC

**Left to right: Gloria Guevara, Taleb Rifai and Manfredi Lefebvre**

AMMAN (JT) — The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has presented its Icon Award to former Jordanian tourism minister Taleb Rifai, recognising his efforts to unite governments and businesses behind global tourism.

The award was presented at the weekend during WTTC's 26th Global Summit at a gala dinner in the Maltese capital Valetta attended by more than 1,000 delegates, including over 200 leading industry CEOs and government ministers, according to a WTTC statement.

Rifai, who served as secretary-general of the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) from 2010 to 2017, is credited with bringing the private sector closer to the heart of international tourism policymaking.

In remarks to Jordanian media, Rifai said of the recognition: "This honour belongs to Jordan as much as it belongs to me, because it reflects what our country has always offered the world: Hospitality, heritage and a belief in openness."

He added: "I hope this recognition will inspire Jordanians, particularly young people working in tourism, to see that Jordan can take a leading role on the global stage when it leads with its people and values."

On the role of tourism at a time of conflict in the region, he said: "Tourism cannot end wars, but it keeps alive the human connections that conflict seeks to sever and gives people on all sides a stake in stability."

"Its role today is quieter and more practical: sustaining livelihoods, preserving our shared heritage and demonstrating that the future of any region is built on openness to the world, not division."

"I also believe, and I have often stated, that the core business of tourism is to make the world a better place."

The Icon Award honours individuals whose lifetime contribution has shaped destinations, institutions or the sector itself, leaving a lasting impact on the industry and the communities it supports.

During his tenure as WTO secretary general, he also built a close partnership between WTTC and WTO, where that alliance became the basis for their joint advocacy before more than 80 heads of state and government.

A landmark example was the Tourism Open Letter and Golden Book initiative, which brought heads of state and industry executives together to champion tourism and became a model for public-private cooperation.

Rifai also championed tourism as a force for peace and cultural exchange, inspiring policymakers and industry leaders alike.

President and CEO of WTTC Gloria Guevara described Rifai as "one of Travel and Tourism's greatest champions" who understood that the sector's future depended on governments and businesses working together, and who devoted his career to making that partnership a reality".

"… His legacy of collaboration, optimism and global leadership continues to benefit our sector today," she said in the statement.

Rifai's career across government, international organisations and global advocacy helped establish WTCC as a vital contributor to economies and societies worldwide, the statement added.

In Amman, he served as minister of planning and international cooperation, minister of information, and minister of tourism and antiquities, before going on to lead WTO as secretary general.

The award, part of WTTC's celebration of leaders who have shaped the modern sector, recognises his commitment and his standing as one of its most respected global leaders.

# He lost his leg, not his dream; Al Dali, from Gaza, returns to Asian Games



Photo courtesy of the Gaza Sunbirds

**Eight years ago, Alaa Al Dali was preparing to represent Palestine at the Asian Games in Jakarta when he was shot by an Israeli sniper in Gaza. Dali will now represent Palestine at the 5th Asian Para Games in Japan**

AMMAN (JT) — Eight years ago, Alaa Al Dali was preparing to represent Palestine at the Asian Games in Jakarta when he was shot by an Israeli sniper in Gaza.

He lost his leg. He also lost his chance to compete at those Games. This month, he finally gets that chance back.

Dali, co-founder and captain of the Gaza Sunbirds, will represent Palestine at the 5th Asian Para Games in Japan, competing in the C2 individual time trial and road race from 21–23 October in Izu, Shizuoka Prefecture.

Gaza Sunbirds is Palestine's para-cycling team, founded in Gaza in 2020 by Dali and Karim Ali. The team supports Palestinian para-athletes to train and compete internationally while using sport as a platform for representation, mobility and advocacy.

Since 2023, Gaza Sunbirds athletes and team members have also led humanitarian operations inside Gaza, delivering food and other essential assistance to communities across the Strip.

Dali will travel as part of the Palestinian delegation alongside five other Palestinian athletes, with Ali accompanying him to Japan after years of working together to build Dali's international racing career.

Dali earned his place at the Asian Games through a Bipartite Commission invitation.

His appearance represents far more than another race. In 2018, Dali was a competitive cyclist with ambitions of racing internationally for Palestine.

Months before the Asian Games, he was shot in the leg during the Great March of Return protests in Gaza. The injury ultimately resulted in the amputation of his leg and brought the cycling career he had known to an abrupt end.

He later returned to cycling on an adapted racing bike and, together with Ali, helped establish the Gaza Sunbirds: a para-cycling team built around athletes in Gaza who had lost limbs and were determined to continue competing.

Eight years after missing the games, Dali will now arrive in Japan as one of Palestine's leading para-cyclists.

"Eight years ago, Alaa lost his leg and lost his chance to race at the Asian Games. This month, he gets that chance back," said Ali.

"That is what makes this moment so extraordinary. He is returning to the start line with one leg, carrying the same Palestinian flag, and competing at the highest level in Asia," Ali added.

His return comes while Gaza and its people continue to endure extraordinary destruction and loss. For the Sunbirds, Dali's presence in Japan is an expression of sumud — Palestinian steadfastness: The refusal to disappear, to surrender a future, or to allow violence to determine what comes next.

But Dali is not travelling to Japan simply to complete the race. He is going to compete for a medal.

At the UCI Asian Para-cycling Road Championships in Saudi Arabia in February, where Palestine competed for the first time, Dali finished fourth in the C2 road race — just seven seconds away from bronze. Since then, his preparation has intensified.

"We are going there believing a medal is possible," said Ali.

"Seven seconds separated Alaa from the podium earlier this year. We know what the gap is. We know what we have to fight for. For Alaa to stand on an Asian Para Games podium eight years after what happened to him would be an incredible sporting achievement — but it would mean much more than sport," Ali added.

For Dali, the race in Japan closes one chapter while opening another.

The athlete who never reached the start line in 2018 will finally reach it in 2026 — not as the cyclist he expected to become, but as a Paralympic-class athlete, the co-founder of Palestine's para-cycling team, and a contender for an Asian Games medal.

This article was contributed by the Gaza Sunbirds to The Jordan Times.



Photo courtesy of GPIA

**Tell Ziraa is a multi-period site a few kilometres southwest of ancient Gadara**

## Tell Zira preserves 5,000 years of continuous settlement in northern Jordan — archaeologists

By Saeb Rawashdeh

AMMAN — Tell Zira is a site located five kilometres southwest from the ancient site of Gadara (Umm Qais) and the mound occupies a strategic position overlooking the Lake of Galilee and the Jordan Valley.

The site preserves the material of 5,000 years of continuous settlements: from the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Mamluk/Ottoman period.

An artesian spring has made possible the long-term habitation of Tell Zara.

Excavations conducted jointly by the Biblical Archaeological Institute in Wuppertal and the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology (GPAI) have uncovered city walls, domestic and elite quarters, rolling seals, a Byzantine courtyard with a mosaic floor, a large underground water cistern and a Mamluk-period grain mill.

The German-American archaeologist Gottlieb Schumaher (1857-1925) began excavations at Tell Zira, which was later directed by Dieter Vieweger, Jutta Haser, Fauke Kenkel, Katharina Schmidt, Brita Jansen and Katja Soennecken.

"Tell Zira is on the very important trade route," said Soennecken at a lecture titled "Tell Zira – 25 years of archaeological work on a settlement mound with 5,000 years of history" held at the GPAI on Wednesday.

The trade routes from the Mediterranean to Damascus and Mesopotamia passed through Tell Zira.

The water, fields and trade routes contributed to development of the site and its continuous occupancy. The archaeological team studied residential quarters of inhabitants and artisans at the site to reconstruct what life at Tell Zira was.

"The residential quarter of the elite was most likely on the very top of the tell," Soennecken said, noting that the problem for researchers is the lack of written sources.

"The spring which supplies the site is 35 metres below the sea level," said Vieweger, noting that there are lots of caves with stalactites and stalagmites.

Another factor that caused water abundance is precipitation since rain fell regularly, Vieweger continued.

The site has multiple levels of habitation, ten layers for each of the periods and in one of them scholars found a tabun, Soennecken said.

"Sea Peoples came as Egyptian mercenaries to Tell Zira in the late Bronze Age," Soennecken said, noting that the Sea Peoples brought their religious cults to the site.

Tell Zira flourished again during the Hellenistic Period when it was economically and politically connected with regional centres.

People in that period moved to the newly established city of Gadara, Soennecken noted.

During the Byzantine time, there was a monastery that continued to exist in the Umayyad Period.

However, the site will continue to be occupied until Ottoman times, Soennecken concluded.



Petra photo

Senate President Faisal Fayez on Thursday meets with Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Pere Joan Pons

# Fayez, OSCE parliamentary assembly official discuss regional developments

AMMAN (JT) — Senate President Faisal Fayez on Thursday met with Secretary-General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Pere Joan Pons, on the sidelines of the Conference of Speakers of International Parliaments in Rome.

The meeting, attended by Jordan's Ambassador to Italy Qais Abu Dayyeh, covered Jordan's relations with European Union member states, regional developments and the need for international cooperation to resolve conflicts in line with international legitimacy resolutions, according to a Senate statement.

Fayez highlighted His Majesty King Abdullah's efforts to maintain engagement with European political leaders and parliamentary institutions, saying these efforts aim to strengthen Jordan-EU cooperation in political, economic, parliamentary and security fields, building on longstanding strategic and historical ties.

Fayez referred to the King's address to the United Nations General Assembly, in which he highlighted the consequences of ongoing global crises and conflicts for international peace, security, economies and human dignity.

He said that the King had called for concrete international measures to protect human life, stop violations and ensure respect for international law.

Fayez also highlighted the King's warnings over Israeli policies in the region, including alleged war crimes in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said the King had called on the international community to hold the Israeli government accountable, including through targeted economic sanctions against the government, settlement entities and extremists.

Fayez warned of the risks posed to Jordan by Israeli policies, including attempts to annex the West Bank, displace Palestinians, undermine the Palestinian cause, turn Jordan into an alternative homeland and challenge the Hashemite Custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

He reaffirmed Jordan's rejection of any settlement of the Palestinian issue at the expense of its national principles, sovereignty, security or stability, stressing the need to enable Palestinians to exercise their rights and establish an independent state.

Fayez welcomed the EU's economic, political and security support for Jordan, as well as its reaffirmation of the Hashemite Custodianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. He also cited the bloc's condemnation of Israeli incursions, rejection of settler violence and attempts to change the legal and historical status quo in Jerusalem, and support for the two-state solution.

Addressing the war involving Iran, the US and Israel, Fayez reiterated Jordan's rejection of Iranian attacks on the Kingdom and Arab Gulf states, stressing that Jordan would not allow its territory to become an arena for conflict.

Both sides warned of the risks posed by continued Iranian threats to regional countries and stressed the need to end the war, whose repercussions extend beyond the region and threaten international peace and stability.

They also discussed the impact of disruptions to energy supplies and trade, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and threats by Iran-backed groups to close Bab Al Mandeb.

They also called for concrete international action to end regional conflicts, halt Israeli policies against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and curb expansionist policies in the region.

Fayez reiterated Jordan's support for a comprehensive resolution to the Palestinian issue based on international legitimacy resolutions and the two-state solution. He said King Abdullah continued to call for political solutions to regional crises and to defend Palestinian rights.

Pons praised Jordan's regional and international role and its efforts to address regional challenges.

He stressed the importance of continued European security support for Jordan as it faces the repercussions of regional conflicts, and praised the Kingdom's role in combating terrorism and drug trafficking, and promoting regional security and stability.

Fayez also held separate meetings with Italian Senate President Ignazio La Russa and Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Numan Kurtulmus. The meetings covered bilateral relations, regional developments and ways to strengthen parliamentary ties.

# ACC One-Stop Shop processes 78,808 transactions in Q3



JT file

The One-Stop Shop at the Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC) processes 78,808 transactions in the third quarter of 2026, according to an ACC statement issued on Thursday

AMMAN (JT) — The One-Stop Shop at the Amman Chamber of Commerce (ACC), which brings representatives of several government departments together to provide services in one location, processed 78,808 transactions in the third quarter of 2026, according to an ACC statement issued on Thursday.

The facility hosts representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Land and Survey, Income and Sales Tax Department, Notary Public, Greater Amman Municipality's profession licensing unit, Department of Civil Status and Passports, and eFAWATEERCOM.

The transactions included 12,843 work permits, 20,500 document authentication and consular consultation transactions, 8,243 land and survey transactions and 8,300 income and sales tax transactions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The Notary Public office handled 4,074 transactions involving powers of attorney, guarantees and agreements, while the profession licensing unit processed 410 transactions.

The Civil Status and Passports office completed 7,599 transactions related to issuing and renewing official documents, while eFAWATEERCOM processed 16,839 electronic payments.

The ACC said that the One-Stop Shop brings government entities together in one location, streamlining procedures and saving visitors time and effort while improving Amman's business environment.

The chamber reaffirmed its commitment to expanding government representation at the facility to better serve the commercial, service and investment sectors, urging businesses and citizens to use the available services.

# Interior minister, Qatari counterpart discuss cooperation



Petra photo

Interior Minister Mazen Farrayeh on Thursday meets with his Qatari Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani

AMMAN (JT) — Interior Minister Mazen Farrayeh on Thursday met with his Qatari Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, and an accompanying delegation.

The meeting was attended by Public Security Directorate Director Maj. Gen. Obaidallah Maaytah, Civil Status and Passports Department Director General Ghaith Tayyib and several ministry officials, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The two ministers discussed issues of mutual concern, focusing on security cooperation, regional developments, and the need to strengthen consultation and coordination.

They also explored ways to exchange expertise and enhance cooperation between the two ministries at various levels.

Farrayeh highlighted the deep-rooted ties between Jordan and Qatar, praising Doha's role in promoting security and stressing the importance of coordination on issues of mutual interest.

Sheikh Khalifa commended the strong relations between the two countries and underscored the importance of furthering cooperation between their interior ministries.

# Momani stresses youth engagement in digital awareness efforts



Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani

AMMAN (JT) — Minister of Government Communication Mohammad Momani on Thursday met with members of the Youth Council for Future Dialogues, launched by the Pulse of Change Association for Youth Empowerment.

The meeting, attended by Ministry Secretary-General Zaid Nawaiseh, highlighted the role of youth initiatives in countering digital disinformation, promoting media awareness and encouraging responsible social media use.

Momani, who is also the government spokesperson, praised Jordanian youth and their talents, highlighting their initiatives and projects, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

He stressed the importance of combining field activities, training programmes and digital tools to expand youth engagement, particularly in artificial intelligence, technology and digital communications.

He said young people's strong presence in the digital sphere enabled them to defend the country's interests, principles and values, adding that youth initiatives helped develop personal, communication and leadership skills.

Momani said the Ministry of Government Communication works to communicate government decisions and policies to all segments of society across the Kingdom's governorates, providing information professionally and explaining the reasons behind decisions, their objectives and their impact on citizens.

Pulse of Change Association for Youth Empowerment President Mashhour Qutaishat said the council aims to develop initiatives based on young people's ideas and priorities and encourage their participation in public life.

He added that the council seeks to communicate the Jordanian state's message and highlight its achievements through youth-led initiatives that raise awareness of national issues, and address local and regional challenges.

Qutaishat said Jordanian youth had the potential to contribute to the country's development, stressing the importance of supporting initiatives that build their skills and encourage active participation in national efforts under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah.

Council members stressed the importance of cooperation with the ministry to develop young people's media, digital, and political skills and produce content that reflects Jordan's national identity and achievements while encouraging participation in public life.

They outlined initiatives in digitalisation and political empowerment, alongside programmes to develop dialogue, persuasion and communication skills.

They also highlighted plans to expand training in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and digital content creation, stressing the need to promote political, media and digital awareness, encourage responsible technology use and combat rumours and disinformation.

These efforts aim to help young people turn their ideas into practical projects that serve the community and the country.

# SSC sentences crystal meth dealers, users to up to five years

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — In an effort to combat the use of Crystal meth in Jordan, the State Security Court (SSC) has recently issued stiff sentences against dealers and consumers of the illicit substance, a police official said on Thursday.

The tough punishments are part of national efforts to combat Crystal meth trafficking and consumption," Police Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Amer Sartawi said.

"The SSC issued sentences ranging from three to five years for convicted individuals who were caught consuming or dealing with this deadly substance," Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

The fines imposed by the SSC in such cases ranged from JD2,500 to JD5,000, Sartawi told The Jordan Times.

Last week, the Anti-Narcotics Department (AND) reiterated its warning to alleged crystal meth users and dealers that its "strict security" campaign against them is ongoing.

Their warning came in the 11th week of its two-month campaign, along with an awareness operation that was initiated by AND in collaboration with the Media and Community Policing Directorate almost two months ago to combat the use of Crystal meth in Jordanian society.

Crystal meth is the common name for crystal methamphetamine, a strong and highly addictive drug that affects the central nervous system, according to WebMD.

The campaigns aim to warn the public about the use of this deadly substance and to pursue individuals who deal in crystal meth.

Sartawi stressed that the "campaign is ongoing until it reaches its goals of spreading awareness and pursuing individuals who deal with this deadly substance".

Sartawi had recently said that Crystal meth "is one of the most dangerous chemical substances that affects people's mental and physical health".

"This dangerous substance causes rapid addiction, severe disturbances in perception and behaviour, and affects bodily functions, especially causing damage to the brain and lungs, in addition to aggression, loss of control and perception, and causing many heinous crimes," Sartawi added.

Citizens are urged to report any person who deals with Crystal meth by contacting 911, according to a statement by the Public Security Directorate (PSD).

All information will be treated with utmost discretion, seriousness, firmness, verification and confidentiality, the PSD statement added.

# Trump's new press secretary faces scrutiny over credentials

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House was facing mounting questions on Wednesday over new press secretary Katie Zacharia's legal credentials, after a faltering first day in the job when she gave an inconclusive answer about where she had passed the bar exam.

A US watchdog group filed a complaint with the State Bar of California, asking it to investigate whether President Donald Trump's spokeswoman , the public face of the administration , had broken the law by repeatedly presenting herself as a lawyer without a licence.

Campaign for Accountability said Zacharia had described herself as a lawyer during television appearances and listed herself as general counsel of a California-based conservative non-profit.

"Ms. Zacharia has represented herself as a lawyer repeatedly to buttress her reputation and credibility," said the group's executive director, Michelle Kuppersmith.

"The State Bar should investigate whether Ms. Zacharia has misled the public about her credentials," she added.

Trump described Zacharia as "an attorney" when announcing her appointment Friday, but journalists have found no record of her being licensed to practice law in any US state.



AFP photo

**Presidential aide Natalie Harp and newly appointed White House Press Secretary Katie Zacharia (right) join US President Donald Trump as they board Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland on Tuesday**

"I practiced international transaction law, with all the appropriate credentials," Zacharia said in a statement to AFP, without clarifying whether she held a US law license.

Zacharia has not specified where, if anywhere, she was admitted to the bar. Asked by reporters Tuesday where she had passed the bar exam, Zacharia replied: "When I moved to China."

California's state bar confirmed to US media that it had no record of Zacharia holding a license under either her married or maiden name.

Zacharia, 41, graduated from Pepperdine University's law school in 2011, but obtaining a law degree does not automatically qualify someone to practice law.

The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that Zacharia sat the California bar exam after graduating but did not pass, citing a source familiar with the matter.

Foreign nationals cannot sit China's bar exam, although they can undertake certain legal work at Chinese law firms.

Zacharia previously worked for a law firm in Beijing, according to her professional profile.

The controversy followed a rocky first appearance as White House press secretary on Tuesday, when Zacharia read extensively from prepared notes during a briefing lasting just 14 minutes.

She took questions from only three news organizations, all considered sympathetic to Trump, and stumbled over some answers, at one point accidentally referring to the president as her husband.

Her performance drew criticism from former White House press secretary Jen Psaki, now a TV news host, who compared it to a "Saturday Night Live" comedy sketch.

Trump, however, praised Zacharia's debut, telling reporters: "I thought she was very good."

Zacharia succeeded Karoline Leavitt, who stepped down in August after becoming one of the most prominent public defenders of Trump's second administration.

# EU will need to increase Ukraine funding to plug gap — Merz

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AFP) — Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Thursday the European Union will have to find more money to finance Ukraine, as Kyiv warns it faces a major budget shortfall next year.

"We must do everything we can to help Ukraine through the winter and also to help next year," Merz said at the start of a two-day summit of EU leaders in Brussels for crunch budget talks.

"We will have to increase the funds again here in order to really assist Ukraine on a lasting basis."

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky was heading to Brussels to join the meeting on Friday in a bid to rally support amid fresh tension with US President Donald Trump.

The war-torn country is facing a dire winter as Moscow has stepped up bombardments, and relations with Washington have soured after Trump struck a deal with Russia to supply diesel fuel.

The mood has darkened as Ukraine has complained that its battlefield access to the US-provided Starlink satellite communications system has been hampered.

EU leaders have thrown their support behind Zelensky.

"We stand shoulder to shoulder with the Ukrainians and they have to do whatever is necessary to protect the Ukrainian people," Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten said.




AFP photo

**Germany's Chancellor Friedrich Merz gets ready to take part in a round table as part of a European Union summit at the EU headquarters in Brussels on Thursday**

> 'These are assets that are frozen in Europe, and they should remain frozen in Europe...'

"Let's step up our game and make sure that they can win this senseless war."

Others backed Ukraine's right to target Russian refineries despite pressure from the United States to stop hitting Moscow's oil production.

"The faster all the Russian refineries and ability to sell energy will be blown to smithereens the better," said Estonian Prime Minister Kristen Michal.

EU leaders are set to open discussions about how to keep Ukraine afloat next year in the face of a growing realisation that funds will run dry.

The EU has in place a 90-billion-euro loan for Kyiv that was set to help cover funding to the end of 2027.

But the Ukrainian authorities have warned they will need tens of billions more as Russia's strikes have battered the country's economy.

The European Commission has said it is working with Kyiv to get a definitive figure for what is needed next year.

The talks around the new funding have reignited calls for the European Union to tap around 200 billion euros in frozen Russian central bank assets to fund Ukraine.

But there seems little momentum on that front as Belgium, where most of the funds are held, remains opposed.

Merz pushed back against any attempt by the United States to try to get Europe to hand over some of the money as part of Washington's peace negotiations with Moscow.

"These are assets that are frozen in Europe, and they should remain frozen in Europe. This is our business, and we will decide on it," he said.

# Death toll from Tropical Storm Rachel rises to 8 in Mexico

TIJUANA, Mexico — At least eight people have died after Tropical Storm Rachel swept along Mexico's Pacific coast, according to an updated toll from government authorities on Wednesday.

Since last week, the storm has brought rain and flooding to the northwestern state of Baja California, which borders the United States.

The Mexican army and navy are continuing search and rescue operations while two other people remain missing, military officials said during a press conference.

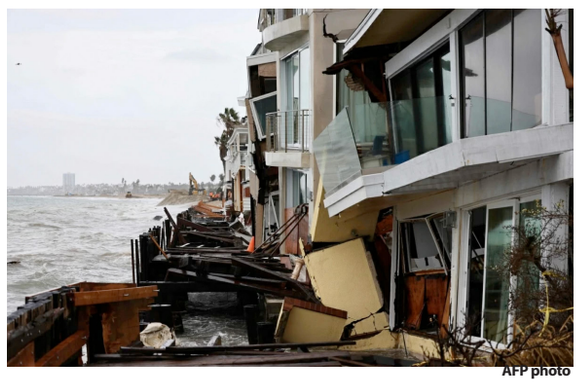
Four deaths had been reported as of Monday, when officials also reported 32 people had been rescued by helicopter.

This year's hurricane season in the Pacific Ocean is expected to be more intense due to the El Nino weather phenomenon, which warms surface waters and disrupts wind and rainfall patterns.

Two other major storms are currently active in the Pacific near Mexico, Category 1 storm Simon and tropical storm Trudy, according to the US National Hurricane Center.

Simon has caused torrential rains in Jalisco and Guerrero, where a 71-year-old died when a wall collapsed recently.

Neither storm is currently expected to make landfall.



AFP photo

**Storm damage on the boardwalk and homes created by Tropical Storm Rachel in Long Beach, California, on Sunday**

# School roof collapse kills teacher, 21 children in NW Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AFP) — Twenty-one pupils and a teacher were killed on Thursday after a roof collapsed at a school in the northwest Pakistani city of Peshawar, a hospital official said.

Asim Khan from Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital confirmed the toll to AFP, adding that over 30 people were injured, with six believed to be in a critical condition.

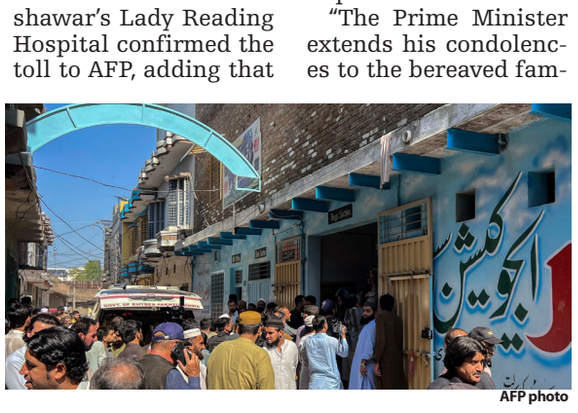
Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in a statement expressed "deep sorrow and grief over the loss of precious lives".

"The Prime Minister extends his condolences to the bereaved families and prays for them to have the strength and patience to bear this irreparable loss," the statement said.

Roof and building collapses are common across Pakistan, mainly because of poor safety standards and shoddy construction materials in the South Asian country of more than 240 million people.

In June this year more than a dozen children were killed in a roof collapse at a tutoring centre in the eastern city of Lahore.

In 2025, 27 people were killed and 10 injured when a five-storey building collapsed in the impoverished area of Lyari in the southern city of Karachi.



AFP photo

**Residents gather during a search operation after a roof collapsed at a school in Peshawar on Thursday**

# 'Can't sleep': Spain's housing crunch upends lives

**By Daniel Silva**
*Agence France-Presse*

MADRID — At 38, Nadinne Fillol has a job, a partner and hopes of having children.

Yet, Spain's housing crisis has left her sharing a flat in Madrid with three other people — and doubting whether she will ever be able to afford a home of her own to start a family.

"There's no realistic way for me to have a home and give them even a minimally good life. It simply isn't possible," Fillol, who works as a comedian, told AFP from her room in the flat in central Madrid.

She would like to set up home with her boyfriend, who lives in the eastern city of Valencia, but the couple says apartment prices are out of their reach.

Across Spain, soaring rents and a shortage of affordable homes are forcing people to delay starting families, putting pressure on households with children and leaving young people struggling to set up on their own.

The crisis has become a major political issue following the recent eviction of 87-year-old Maricarmen Abascal from her lifelong home and her subsequent death, which fuelled nationwide protests.

Hundreds of tents have occupied Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square since she was taken away on a stretcher last month after the real estate company that owned her flat drastically hiked the rent.



AFP photo

**Manuel Navarro, 32, poses in front of the building he lives in with his wife and their three children while threatened with eviction, in Madrid on October 7**

Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called an early election for November 29 after his minority government failed to pass housing measures prompted by the protests.

### 'Infuriating'

"It's infuriating," said Fillol, who has slept at the protest camp, fighting back tears as she discussed the legislative defeat.

Damp patches and water damage mark the hallway ceiling of her flat, and the windows do not shut properly.

Fillol said her landlord refused to make repairs, telling her and the other tenants they would struggle to find affordable alternatives.

She earns nearly 2,000 euros ($2,200) a month before taxes, just below Spain's average gross monthly salary of around 2,460 euros.

Fillol pays 350 euros a month for a room barely big enough for a bed and a computer desk, allowing her to save towards a deposit on her own home.

> 'In front of my little ones, I try to lead a normal life, but when night comes I start thinking...'

But the deposit she needs keeps rising faster than she can save.

"It delays every major life milestone," she said.

### 'What's going to happen?'

Homeownership has long been the norm in Spain, where around three-quarters of households own their properties.

But asking prices for homes have risen by about 90 per cent in Spain over the past decade, while average rents have almost doubled, according to real estate website Idealista.

Renting a 50-square-metre apartment in Madrid cost an average of 1,170 euros a month in September — around half the average gross monthly salary.

For Manuel Navarro, 32, who earns around 800 euros a month doing odd jobs, renting on the open market is out of reach.

He lives with his wife and their three children, aged four, seven and eight, in a flat belonging to the Madrid regional government's social housing agency that they occupy without authorisation.

Authorities are seeking to evict the family.

"There are days when I can't sleep," Navarro told AFP at his flat, where a battered pram containing two well-worn dolls stood by the entrance.

"In front of my little ones, I try to lead a normal life, but when night comes I start thinking, 'My God, what's going to happen? What am I going to do with my children? Where am I going to go?'"

### 'Really hard'

Landlords complain that evicting tenants who stop paying rent can take months, leaving them to cover mortgage payments and other costs, and that changing rules on renting create legal uncertainty.

The Bank of Spain estimates the country faces a housing shortage of 700,000 homes.

Rising immigration and the growth of short-term tourist rentals have added to demand, while bureaucracy and labour shortages are slowing construction.

"There's hardly anything available," said Laura Alonso, 26, who scrambled to find a new home with her partner in August after their landlord gave them notice.

"It was a really hard time," she said, fearing she would have to move back in with her parents, into her childhood bedroom.

"As soon as a flat comes onto the market, 50 people are phoning," she told AFP at the couple's new flat in suburban Madrid, where boxes lay unpacked.




JT photo

**The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday extends condolences to Pakistan over the victims of a school roof collapse in Peshawar**

## Jordan extends condolences to Pakistan over school roof collapse

AMMAN (JT) — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday extended condolences to Pakistan over the victims of a school roof collapse in Peshawar.

Ministry spokesperson Fouad Majali expressed Jordan's solidarity with the Pakistani government and people, offered condolences to the victims' families and wished the injured a speedy recovery, according to a ministry statement.

# IEC joins international association of election bodies

AMMAN (JT) — The Independent Election Commission (IEC) has joined the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), strengthening international cooperation and the exchange of expertise in election management.

Addressing A-WEB members on Thursday, IEC Chief Commissioner Musa Maaytah stressed the importance of international cooperation and knowledge exchange in improving electoral practices and upholding integrity, transparency and participation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The IEC said that the membership aligns with its strategy to strengthen international cooperation, engage with other electoral authorities and benchmark its practices against international standards to improve Jordan's electoral framework.




Petra photo

**The Independent Election Commission (IEC) joins the Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB)**

A-WEB is an international organisation comprising more than 120 election management bodies worldwide. It works to build institutional capacity and promote transparent electoral processes.

# Somalia sets May presidential election despite insecurity

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Somalia announced on Thursday that parliamentary and presidential elections would be held next year in the deeply fragmented country that faces a long-running Islamist insurgency.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's second term ended earlier this year but his government declared a "transition period" in May, despite an agreement with the opposition on holding elections.

Mohamud has been attempting to move Somalia towards democratic elections, replacing a system based around clan elders, although his attempts have been opposed by regional leaders, who view it as a power grab.

The Election Commission said in a statement that parliamentary polls would be held on April 15, followed by a presidential vote scheduled for May 15.



AFP photo

**A Somali woman provides her fingerprints during a biometric voter registration exercise in Mogadishu on April 15, 2025**

In the capital Mogadishu, residents expressed mixed views.

"Announcing an election schedule through a process driven by one side, and rejected by the opposition, is effectively declaring a new conflict," Omar Said said.

Mohamud assumed power in 2022 but has argued he was given an extra year in the presidency when an amended constitution was passed by parliament earlier this year that set the framework for elections and extended the vote.

But opposition parties boycotted that vote and have rejected the changes, including the powerful states of Jubaland and Puntland.

"There's no political agreement to hold those elections," analyst Samira Gaid told AFP.

She said that the government was essentially made up of Mogadishu and "two or three allied member states", and expressed concern it would lead to more "conflict and more confrontation within the remaining federal member states".

"All the processes that the government is starting are leading to further fragmentation," she said.

University student Fadumo Ali worried that a disputed federal election "could undermine governance and national unity".

She urged the president to sit down with the opposition, "and agree on the federal election to prevent further turmoil".

Former president Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo said on X the unilateral election decision was a "dangerous threat to Somalia's statehood and future" and urged an agreement with all factions.

### Insecurity

With much of the country also under the control of Islamist insurgent group Al Shabaab, little progress has been made on organising elections beyond a few localised pockets.

Somalia faces uncertainty regarding funding for the African Union mission, AUSSOM, which is the leading force supporting the Somali army.

Although the United States initially said it would cut all funding by the end of 2026, it has subsequently indicated the money will continue to flow for another year.

Meanwhile, clashes have broken out as discontent brews, with the capital seeing heavy gunfire between rival political factions in June ahead of planned demonstrations against Mohamud's political changes.

The government also sent in troops to oust the head of South West State, Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed Laftagareen, in March.

Clashes between federal troops and forces allied to him have erupted sporadically since, including reports of fresh fighting on Thursday.

In Mogadishu, resident Muqtar Hussein said the situation in South West "illustrates the risks of proceeding with disputed elections without political consensus".

But greengrocer Mohamed Hassan was adamant: "I see this as a victory for the Somali people... those willing to participate should proceed, and whoever wins should lead the country.

# UN chief urges nations to end 'war on nature'

PARIS (AFP) — UN chief Antonio Guterres said on Thursday that the "war on nature has not yet ended" as he launched a report showing the world was falling short of its biodiversity committments.

Nations will assess progress and pitfalls toward a 2030 goal to stop the destruction of nature when they meet in Armenia next week for the UN biodiversity negotiations.

Nearly 200 countries joined the landmark "Paris Agreement for Nature" four years ago but have been slow to act on its objectives.

The pact laid out 23 targets for halting and reversing nature loss by 2030, including reducing pollution, protecting threatened species and conserving 30 percent of the world's land and oceans.

> 'Nature won't thrive on good intentions'

But many of these targets are off track, said Guterres as he launched a global report spotlighting the gaps between ambition and action.

"It's not all bad news... There is progress, but not enough. We are far from what is necessary," he told reporters in the Armenian capital Yerevan where the COP17 talks start on Monday.

"The report shows that many of the critical elements of progress... are still missing in action".

This meant the "war on nature has not yet ended", he added.

The report showed that government policies were insufficient to meet the centrepiece biodiversity goal to protect 30 per cent of Earth's land and waters by 2030.

Other targets were lagging further behind. Guterres said countries must honour their financial pledges to developing countries and spoke to a lack of headway in tackling government spending that harms nature.

Countries have vowed to reduce harmful subsidies by $500 billion a year by 2030 — state incentives for industries like fossil fuel production, mining and agriculture — but little progress has been made.

For every dollar invested in protecting or restoring nature, about $30 still goes into activities that degrade it, according to UN figures.

"Nature won't thrive on good intentions," Guterres said.

He pointed to the "very strong influence" of some sectors that had "too much power" over government including industrial fishing, fossil fuels and logging operations.

The lack of finance has been identified as a particular barrier to achieving the biodiversity goals.

Governments are not expected to make major new pledges at COP17 but will be under pressure to correct course.

"Biodiversity is in crisis. Species are disappearing and ecosystems are collapsing," said Sue Lieberman from the Wildlife Conservation Society.

"Governments and all stakeholders must see that investing in nature is not a luxury, it is the very key to our survival."

# Sudan air strike kills five children — rights group

KHARTOUM (AFP) — An airstrike killed five children in a paramilitary-controlled town in Sudan's North Kordofan state on Thursday, a rights group said, blaming the attack on the army.

The strike came as fighting has intensified in the strategic region linking eastern and western Sudan, where the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been battling for territory more than three years into a war that has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions.

The Emergency Lawyers, which monitors abuses in Sudan's conflict, said an army Antonov aircraft struck a house in the village of Abu Zaeima, killing five children from the same family and injuring their mother.

The military did not immediately comment on the allegation.

The Kordofan region has also been targeted by drone strikes, with both sides increasingly using the weapons to launch far-reaching attacks without sacrificing their fighters.

UN figures show that more than 1,100 people were killed by drone strikes across Sudan during the first half of this year alone.

In North Kordofan's capital El Obeid, repeated drone strikes on civilian sites have deepened a humanitarian crisis and taken a heavy toll on children, the Norwegian Refugee Council said on Thursday.

ShashwatSaraf, NRC's country director in Sudan, said children were being forced to make "impossible choices" to continue their education.

Recent attacks have hit a shelter for displaced families, a university dormitory and warehouses containing more than 330,000 textbooks in North Kordofan.



AFP photo

**This screen grab made from the UGC footage obtained on Monday shows people inspecting the site of an air strike in the mining area of Jabal Al Uqaydat, in Sudan**

# Musk suggests US govt behind any slowdown in Ukraine's Starshield system

Continued from page 1

Musk drew a distinction between the Starshield system, which Ukraine relies on for battlefield communications, and the parallel Starlink civilian satellite system, which Ukraine also deploys but is not allowed to use for offensive operations. Both were designed by Musk's SpaceX.

Musk was responding to a post on X by Ukraine's former defense minister Mykhailo Fedorov, who said that "Starlink connectivity at speeds of up to 160 km/h is being restored," but that "removing Starshield's speed limit entirely is now critical for Ukraine's defence."

Fedorov then thanked Musk for his "continued support".

Ukrainian defence officials have suggested Washington is behind slower speeds reported on some internet terminals that help the country's military hit Russian-occupied territory and operate interceptor drones.

Ukraine has also accused the United States of helping Russia by failing to warn it of incoming missile strikes, with Kyiv hit by ballistic missiles for two nights in a row before air raid sirens could sound to warn people to take cover.

Opposition Democrats in the US Senate and House denounced the Trump Administration over the reported interrupted connections.

"Trump's making a choice — and it directly aids Putin's slaughter of Ukrainian civilians," House Foreign Affairs Committee Democrats said in a post on X, describing restrictions as "unconscionable" while Ukraine faced an onslaught of Russian drones and missiles.

In the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, top Democrat Jeanne Shaheen said the "restrictions on Ukraine's access to Starshield must stop immediately," adding that "lives are at stake."

Shaheen also said that the defence department is required to notify "Congress if it pauses or downgrades intelligence sharing with Ukraine," and called on Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth to immediately provide that notification if there are changes.

Republican Senator Tom Tillis also voiced concern, posting on X: "Supporting Ukrainian sovereignty — or at the very least, allowing for it — should not be a gray area for the US government or for American corporations."

Trump, facing key midterm elections next month in which fuel prices are a major issue, has blamed Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refineries for the squeeze on supplies and increase in prices at the pump.

A senior official in Kyiv confirmed that the United States had in recent days threatened to stop providing intelligence about Russian missile launches that Ukraine uses to thwart attacks.

Trump denied doing so on Tuesday.

# Coalition says Houthis attacked King Khalid International Airport 20 times so far this month

Continued from page 1

"1,104 missiles and 1,135 drones have been fired at the Kingdom since the start of operations," he added.

Al Maliki said the Iran-backed Houthis have acquired advanced technology with the help of regional parties and built mountain warehouses in Sanaa, Saada, and Amran as launch pads for attacks.

The militia is using civilian infrastructure and Yemen's resources to fuel their war effort and the coalition has destroyed 127 warehouses in mountainous areas and numerous launch pads belonging to the Houthis during the last few days.

"The Houthis must immediately cease all terrorist operations targeting civilians and civilian facilities, including airports, ports, oil facilities, and infrastructure," he added.

THE JORDAN TIMES

An independent Arab political daily, established in 1975

Chairman of the Board
**Samih Maaitah**

Director General
**Hasan Jazzazi**

Editor-in-Chief
**Raed Omari**

Editorial and advertising offices
Jordan Press Foundation

The Jordan Times is published daily except Saturdays

Published by the Jordan Press Foundation
Queen Rania Al Abdullah Street
P.O. Box 6710
Amman 11118

E mail: **editor@jordantimes.com**
**jotimes@jordantimes.com**
Website: **jordantimes.com**

Follow us on X Platform: **@jordantimes.com**
Like our facebook page: **thejordantimes**
Youtube: **thejordantimes**

National Library registration number:
**D/1998/2062**
Telephone: **5600800 ext. 2392**
Facsimile: **5696183**
Advertising facsimile: **5696183**
Circulation Department:
**5600800** ext: **2383**

# Is Christian democracy finished?

**By Jan –Werner Mueller**

BERLIN — Recent state elections in Germany have been portrayed as momentous, since the far-right finished first in two and may well come to power in one. Yet future historians may focus on another, largely overlooked outcome: For the first time in the post-World War II period, Germany's Christian Democrats (CDU) failed to pass the 5 per cent electoral threshold. Worse, this disastrous result occurred in the largely rural state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where former Chancellor Angela Merkel chaired the CDU's state branch for close to seven years.

Can the CDU avoid the kind of wholesale collapse that other centre-right parties have suffered in Western Europe in recent years? History offers some clues. Christian Democracy originated in 19th-century Europe as a movement to protect Catholics from what were perceived as overbearing secular states. Taking their cues from Pope Leo XIII's Catholic social doctrine, which acknowledged the ills of capitalism while decrying class warfare, the parties associated with the movement were distinguished by their reformist approach to addressing the inequality and immiseration caused by the Industrial Revolution.

But, unlike some of their socialist contemporaries, the early Christian Democrats did not see class warfare as the answer. Instead, they believed that a harmonious balance between labour and capital could be found by doing justice to the interests of different groups in society. The Christian Democratic parties that emerged in Western Europe after 1945 were both fiercely anti-communist and largely committed to the creation of welfare states. In Germany, Italy and France, their vision of social harmony often centred on conventional conceptions of the family.

Moreover, in contrast to the traditional right, which had been discredited by open alliances with fascists, Christian Democrats harboured deep suspicions about nationalism. They well remembered how the newly unified German and Italian nation-states of the late 19th century had attacked Catholic citizens as insufficiently patriotic (on the assumption that they were primarily loyal to the Vatican). It was no accident that the leading Christian Democrats of the immediate post-war period, West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Italian prime minister Alcide de Gasperi, were the prime architects of European integration, laying the foundation on which most Europeans' political life rests to this day.

The Italian Christian Democratic party effectively disappeared after the end of the Cold War, when the loss of its anti-communist rationale meant that it could no longer survive its corruption scandals. But the German Christian Democrats — who have governed the country for two-thirds of the postwar period — have held on. Like the Tories in Britain, the party was seen as the default — reliably competent, if not exciting or visionary. CDU-led governments often presented themselves as self-consciously flexible on political ideas and also gradually dropped the party's close identification with religion.

As a result, secularisation did not necessarily undermine the party's electoral support. As long as money was plentiful, the strategy of mediating among different interests in society worked well. Merkel, a Protestant, was the last great practitioner of the Catholic social doctrine. She famously demobilised any opposition by taking care of all groups in society. Germany's reliance on cheap Russian energy and large Chinese export markets during her 16-year tenure made that easier.

The CDU's current crisis is often attributed to Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whose policy agenda — and, frankly, whose personality — is quite unpopular. But many of the party's problems are structural. The tried-and-tested political technology of Christian Democracy works less well when a society can no longer be neatly disaggregated into groups with clearly defined interests. Pursuing harmony through mediation is a tall order in a political culture that has become both more individualistic and, paradoxically, more polarised.

Moreover, Christian Democrats are no longer assumed to be the party of competence, especially when it comes to the economy. Many of the faces associated with mismanaging the COVID-19 crisis happened to belong to Christian Democrats, and though the party won the 2025 federal elections, polls still register a long-term loss of trust.

Owing to these challenges, some Christian Democrats are now tempted to copy the culture-war strategies of the far -right, as if aping talking points about "gender ideology" and other alleged "woke excesses" will shore up their conservative, religious credentials. In the process, they tend to forget that the far-right's political model of deepening divisions in society and inciting hatred against minorities is fundamentally incompatible with the traditional Christian Democratic pursuit of harmony.

The positive reaction to Pope Leo XIV's encyclical on AI demonstrates that even non-religious citizens find something attractive about an old-style humanist message emphasising people's need for stability and dignity. Christian Democrats might learn a thing or two from the pontiff's approach. Imitating political entrepreneurs who only ever invoke Christianity as a matter of national belonging — what some call "Christianism" — is a dead end.

More to the point, Merz, a child of the old West Germany, which remains deeply imbued with Adenauer's vision, could try to reclaim his party's pro-European heritage. With Europe under attack from the United States, Russia, and China, he should distance himself from the day-to-day domestic bickering about economic policy and migration (where he will never please the far right). His mission should be to work with French President Emmanuel Macron — who might just have some political capital left to spend on foreign policy — and other European leaders to create a secure continent for the 21st century.

Jan-Werner Mueller, professor of Politics at Princeton University, is a fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna and the author of the forthcoming "Street, Palace, Square: The Architecture of Democratic Spaces" (Penguin Books, 2026)

# School headscarf ban meets resistance in Austria

*Agence France-Presse*

VIENNA — As the new school year gets under way in Austria, a headscarf ban for girls under 14 has sparked protests on the streets and in the classroom, with dozens of pupils refusing to comply.

Austria's conservative-led government has insisted that the ban, introduced on September 1, promotes gender equality and protects Muslim girls from "segregation and oppression".

But critics argue that it disproportionately targets Muslims, infringes upon religious freedom and is forcing young girls to dress in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Since the ban took effect, education authorities across Austria have held 127 meetings with parents and filed 52 reports over alleged breaches of the law, according to the education ministry.

Opponents of the ban have also held protests across the country, with several hundred people gathering each time.

**'Part of me'**

At a demonstration in Vienna, Zehra, 37, who did not want to give her last name, said her two daughters, aged nine and 13, were "sad and angry" about the ban.

"We raise our children by telling them, you can decide who you want to be, and this law is the exact opposite," she said.

Seham, 12, said she felt "afraid" to remove her headscarf at school "because I'd worn it for two years and it felt like a part of me".

After discussions with school leaders, she said she was allowed to cover her hair with an alternative non-traditional head covering, but would still "rather wear the full headscarf".

Roughly 8 per cent of Austria's 9 million residents are Muslim, according to 2021 government statistics.

They suffer the highest rates of racism and discrimination against Muslims in the EU, according to a 2024 report by Europe's FRA rights agency.

In the 2024 elections, the far-right Freedom Party won for the first time even though it failed to form a government. The anti-immigration party continues to top voter opinion polls.

The new law is Austria's second attempt to restrict headscarves in schools after a coalition between the conservatives and the Freedom Party introduced a ban for primary school pupils in 2019.

That law was overturned by the constitutional court on the grounds that a regulation targeting only Muslims was incompatible with religious neutrality.

**'Under pressure'**

The Islamic Religious Community in Austria, which is supporting legal action against the new headscarf ban, said it had received around 70 reports from families about difficulties during its implementation.

"A law that was justified as protecting children's welfare is putting precisely those children under pressure at school," the group said in a statement.

The constitutional court confirmed to AFP that it had received a legal complaint about the law and a decision is expected in the first half of 2027.

When girls refuse to comply with the law, schools are required to hold a series of discussions with pupils and their parents before cases are referred to education authorities.

Ultimately, parents who continue to ignore the ban can be fined.

In a statement sent to AFP, Education Minister Christoph Wiederkehr said the fact there had only been 127 meetings so far showed "that the vast majority of pupils and parents are cooperative".

"In addition, the figures show that the discussions held with the parents concerned in the event of a violation are, for the most part, successful," he added.

Education authorities in Vienna said that "on the basis of the discussions held so far, the impression has emerged that the girls wish to wear the headscarf of their own accord".

Sandy, 12, said she began wearing a headscarf about a year ago because "I place a lot of importance on my religion and I want to be able to live it".

A teacher who has worked with two affected girls in the capital told AFP there was no sign they were being forced to wear headscarves.

The girls had spent weeks adapting to the new rules and searching for acceptable alternatives to headscarves, said the teacher, who wished to remain anonymous. "It is very uncomfortable for them."

# Prospect of Bolsonaro win looms large over Brazil's Indigenous

*Agence France-Presse*

MANAUS, Brazil — Brazil's Amazonian Indigenous communities are watching with bated breath as presidential candidate Flavio Bolsonaro inches closer to power, recalling the damage wrought on the rainforest under his father Jair Bolsonaro.

The surname they share "represents everything bad for us", Inara Waty, leader of the Satere-Mawe people in the Amazonian city of Manaus, told AFP.

"It mainly means fear," she said, her eyes filling with tears as she recalled life under the last Bolsonaro administration.

Jair Bolsonaro governed the world's most biodiverse country between 2019 and 2022, a period marked by record levels of deforestation in the Amazon and backsliding in Indigenous rights.

His son, the favourite in the October 25 runoff against leftist incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, says he would run a "Bolsonaro 2.0" presidency.

"The greatest way we addressed environmental issues was what we did during president Bolsonaro's administration," the senator said during an interview on the campaign trail.

The candidate believes his father, currently serving 27 years for coup-plotting, "fought" against a "radical environmental agenda".

He claims that extreme weather events that scientists attribute to man-made global warming are merely "cyclical".

**'Question of life'**

Like his father, Flavio Bolsonaro can count on the support of large-scale agricultural and livestock producers locked in land disputes with Indigenous communities.

Bolsonaro allies were elected in seven of Brazil's nine Amazonian states earlier this month.

"They want land to plant soy, to keep their cattle. We want land to survive, to plant; we want the land so we can take care of it," said Waty.

This divide makes the election a "question of life" for Indigenous people, she added.

A recent video posted online showed women from the Yanomami ethnic group accusing Flavio Bolsonaro of having ties to illegal miners.

"If the forest is destroyed, how are we going to live?" they shout, their faces adorned with paint.

"We don't want to be killed again!"

During Jair Bolsonaro's mandate, this community suffered invasions by artisanal gold miners known as "garimpeiros," whose activities triggered a humanitarian crisis.

Flavio Bolsonaro has proposed treating the environment as a "strategic asset", including a pledge to end "illegal deforestation" by 2029.

That point harks back to a similar, unfulfilled promise by his father, who instead oversaw soaring deforestation rates.

That goal "is incompatible with [Flavio Bolsonaro's] environmental policy", said Adriana Ramos of the NGO Instituto Socioambiental.

His campaign did not respond to AFP's request for information about his environmental program, nor a request for comment about Indigenous and environmental concerns.

**'Even worse'**

One particularly painful moment for these groups was in 2019, when fires started by government-aligned landowners scorched the rainforest for weeks on end.

Authorities at the time caused "daily madness for everyone", said Suely Araujo of the Climate Observatory NGO.

The Amazon lost around 11,600 square kilometres of rainforest per year under Jair Bolsonaro, almost 60 per cent more than in the previous four years, official figures show.

Lula's government slashed that figure by half in 2025 and expanded the limits of Indigenous lands.

But it also faces criticism for backing oil exploration off the Amazonian coast.

The climate has barely registered as an issue during this election campaign, although Brazil is vulnerable to the El Nino weather pattern, which causes drought and other erratic conditions in the region.

The number of fires in Amazonas state skyrocketed in September and October this year compared to the same period in 2025.

"During Jair Bolsonaro's administration, this drive to destroy the forest was only just beginning, and now [with Flavio] it could be even worse" if he wins, said Araujo.

The senator beat Lula by two percentage points in the first round on October 4.

# Between Ethiopia and Eritrea, a border town's residents worry

*Agence France-Presse*

ADDIS ABABA — Around the border town of Zalambessa, Eritrean and Ethiopian armies face each other with anxious civilians stuck between them, residents told AFP, as the threat of regional war looms.

The town is a border crossing, albeit one that has been closed for several years, only briefly opening in 2018 during a brief rapprochement between the two neighbouring nations.

The countries are once again at loggerheads, with Eritrea deploying thousands of troops in northern Tigray, according to a security source, to back rebels also fighting central control.

"Ethiopian troops are on one side, and Eritrean troops are on the other," Selam, 33, whose first name has been changed for security reasons, told AFP on Thursday.

Eritrean soldiers pushed south initially, before drone strikes forced them into a retreat, melting into the hillsides of the mountainous region.

Although there is no fighting now, Selam said speaking via telephone, her small shop and home have been without power or water for a week.

"We are caught in the middle and living in deep anxiety."

**'Pray'**

Federal forces have deployed heavy weaponry in recent days towards Zalambessa, according to conflict monitor ACLED.

They said eyewitnesses had observed a "substantial convoy of tanks and heavy weaponry advancing" from the south towards Zalambessa.

AFP was unable to independently verify this information.

Within the town, an eerie silence has fallen, according to residents.

"Shops, restaurants and other businesses are closed, and you hardly see anyone on the streets," said Hadush, 45, who also asked to be identified by only one name.

"Most people only go out to attend church and pray."

With the roads into the town blocked, he said, few supplies were making it through, sending prices soaring and making goods scarce.

Indeed, "now there is no bread", he said.

"The people of Zalambessa are living in deep anxiety," he told AFP.

Shopkeeper Selam said that federal soldiers were preventing residents from leaving to go to Adigrat city, some 30 kilometres south.

"We cannot visit our families or bring in groceries and other supplies," she said.

Eritrea's Minister of Information Yemane Gebremeskel did not respond to AFP questions about the presence of Eritrean troops.

**'De-escalation'**

The renewed tension between the two has worried the international community.

On Wednesday, the United States urged Ethiopia and Eritrea to pursue "de-escalation", insisting that all countries "respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbours and avoid cross-border incursions".

Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993, and fought a deadly 1998-2000 war, before briefly mending ties when current leader Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018.

But they have fallen out again, severing relations this month over the Tigrayan conflict.

Ethiopia accuses Eritrea of backing the rebel Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which launched a major offensive against government forces on September 23.

Meanwhile, Asmara alleges landlocked Ethiopia is planning to use the conflict as a justification to invade its territory and seize control of Assab Port on the Red Sea.

Despite initial successes in the Afar region, the TPLF have fallen back ahead of federal forces, abandoning cities and towns for the hills.

Pro-government forces took control of regional capital Mekelle without any fighting on October 3 and continued further north, seizing a string of towns without encountering any resistance.

The latest to fall is Rama town, just seven kilometres from Eritrea, two residents told AFP.




Petra photo

**Royal Jordanian vice chairman and CEO, Samer Majali, is currently participating in the 'Wings of Change Europe 2026' symposium, organised by the International Air Transport Association in Brussels**

## RJ Airlines joins IATA Aviation Symposium in Brussels

AMMAN (JT) — Royal Jordanian (RJ) Vice Chairman and CEO, Samer Majali, is currently participating in the "Wings of Change Europe 2026" symposium, organised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Brussels.

Senior officials, decision makers, airline leaders and representatives of international institutions are also taking part.

Majali's participation is part of strategic discussions on the future of the aviation industry, according to RJ statement Thursday.

Talks address geopolitical challenges, economic pressures and rising operating costs and ways to strengthen airline competitiveness and develop regulatory policies that support the sector's growth and sustainability.

As for its agenda, the symposium highlights the main shifts in air transport and the importance of stronger air connectivity. It looks at the role of connectivity in supporting economic development, trade and tourism.

Participants are also discussing ways to build a more resilient, competitive and sustainable aviation sector worldwide.

## Abu Ghazaleh promotes Jordan investment opportunities in Brussels



Photo Courtesy of Ministry of Investment

**Investment Minister Tareq Abu Ghazaleh meets with EU and Belgian officials in Brussels on Thursday to explore ways to expand investment partnerships and boost participation in the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, scheduled to be held at the Dead Sea on November 19**

AMMAN (JT) — Investment Minister Tareq Abu Ghazaleh met with EU and Belgian officials in Brussels on Thursday to explore ways to expand investment partnerships and boost participation in the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, scheduled to be held at the Dead Sea on November 19.

During the visit, Abu Ghazaleh also held talks with private-sector representatives to promote investment opportunities in Jordan and strengthen engagement with European policymakers and business communities.

The discussions focused on investment cooperation and ways to translate shared interests into concrete projects, according to a Ministry of Investment statement.

At a roundtable organised by the Arab-Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce, Abu Ghazaleh discussed investment opportunities and ways to encourage European private-sector participation in the conference.

He said Jordan offers competitive advantages for European companies seeking to invest in the Kingdom and expand into regional and international markets, citing its strategic location and skilled workforce.

These advantages, he added, create opportunities for partnerships that combine European technology with local capabilities.

The minister described the conference as a practical platform for advancing the Jordan-EU strategic partnership through economic cooperation. He said the event would bring together investors, companies and financial institutions to identify specific opportunities and advance them towards negotiations, financing and implementation.

He called for follow-up on opportunities identified during the conference to develop commercially viable projects that support Jordan's economy, create jobs for Jordanians, and facilitate the transfer of technology and expertise.

Abu Ghazaleh and European Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica highlighted the investment opportunities and priority sectors to be presented at the conference, expressing their commitment to translating these opportunities into concrete investment projects and partnerships.

Both sides expressed their readiness for the conference and renewed their invitation to European companies and business communities to participate.

## Jordan's economy maintains growth momentum despite regional challenges — JSF

AMMAN (JT) — The Jordan Strategy Forum (JSF) has issued a report titled "Jordan's Economy: Encouraging Performance Amid Ongoing Uncertainty" as part of its "Knowledge is Power" series, highlighting the economy's resilience amid regional challenges.

The report reviews key economic indicators for 2026, comparing them with previous years.

The JSF noted that regional instability has compounded domestic economic challenges, citing the World Bank's assessment that regional conflicts are testing Jordan's ability to maintain stability, sustain economic activity and adapt to changing conditions.

Economic growth rose from 2.5 per cent in the second quarter of 2024 to 2.8 per cent in the same quarter of 2025 and 3 per cent in the second quarter of 2026. The forum said this trend could bring annual growth close to 3 per cent in 2026, provided economic activity maintains its momentum.

Inflation stood at around 2.2 per cent during the first eight months of 2026, helping ease pressure on purchasing power and business costs.

Manufacturing grew by 6.2 per cent, contributing around 33 per cent of total economic growth, while agriculture expanded by 7.8 per cent, accounting for approximately 11.3 per cent.

The trade deficit narrowed by 6 per cent during the first seven months of 2026, while the export-to-import coverage ratio improved from 51 per cent to 55 per cent. Exports rose by 10.3 per cent to JD6.40 billion, compared with 2.4 per cent growth in imports.

Net job creation reached approximately 96,200 in 2025, with Jordanians accounting for 91 per cent. Unemployment among Jordanians fell to 21 per cent in the second quarter of 2026, down from 21.3 per cent a year earlier. The number of active social security contributors rose by 4.3 per cent to 1.69 million by the end of September.

> The JSF Investor Confidence Index rose by 21.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2026 compared with the previous quarter

Tourism also improved, with Jordan receiving 4.97 million visitors in the first eight months of 2026, up by 2.9 per cent year-on-year. Tourism receipts reached JD3.94 billion in the first half of the year, compared with JD3.83 billion in the same period of 2025.

Remittances from Jordanians working abroad rose by 14.1 per cent to JD2.1 billion during the first seven months of 2026, supporting household income, domestic demand and foreign currency inflows.

Licensed building areas increased by 4.7 per cent to 5.84 million square metres between January and July, with residential areas rising by 10.7 per cent. The forum cautioned that building permits do not necessarily translate into actual construction activity.

Financing for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) reached approximately JD3.56 billion by the end of the first half of 2026.

New company registrations rose by 7.24 per cent to 6,046 during the first nine months of 2026, while dissolved or deregistered companies fell by 15 per cent.

Investment in development zones rose by 18.8 per cent to JD6.9 billion in the first half of 2026, while employment increased from 117,000 to approximately 123,000. Foreign direct investment stock reached JD28.4 billion by the end of the second quarter, up from JD26.4 billion a year earlier.

Listed companies recorded combined profits of JD1.20 billion in the first half of 2026, an increase of 14.3 per cent year-on-year and the second-highest first-half total on record.

The forum also highlighted the Amman Stock Exchange's performance in 2025, when its general index rose by 45.1 per cent, earning it an award as the best-performing Arab stock exchange based on weighted index growth.

The JSF Investor Confidence Index rose by 21.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2026 compared with the previous quarter. The economic activity confidence sub-index increased by 74.3 per cent, reaching its highest quarterly level in three years.

Citing the International Monetary Fund's June 2026 assessment, the report said Jordan had maintained macroeconomic stability despite regional conflict, supported by foreign currency reserves, a sound banking sector and progress in implementing economic reforms.

The JSF said sustaining this progress would require greater domestic and foreign investment, stronger private-sector partnerships, higher productivity, quality job creation and improved living standards.

The forum also highlighted the Jordan-EU Investment Conference, scheduled for November 19, 2026, at the Dead Sea, as an opportunity to connect Jordanian projects with European financing, technology and expertise.

## US producer prices see biggest jump since 2022 in added challenge to Trump

WASHINGTON, United States (AFP) — US wholesale inflation surged past analysts' expectations in September, marking its biggest jump since 2022 as the war in Iran sent fuel prices rocketing, government data showed on Thursday.

The latest numbers, coming a day after hotter-than-anticipated consumer inflation, underscore the challenges that President Donald Trump faces in cooling prices and winning over cost-weary voters in November's midterm elections.

The Producer Price Index (PPI) was up 6.3 per cent from a year ago last month, according to the Labour Department, significantly above the 5.5 per cent expected in a forecast published by MarketWatch.

The acceleration from August was also the biggest year-on-year jump since December 2022, the department said.

On a month-on-month basis, PPI rose by 1.3 per cent, the widest advance since March 2022. This was similarly a sharp increase from the 0.5 per cent rate in August.

Half of the September uptick for goods costs can be "traced to prices for gasoline, which jumped 20.3 per cent", the report said.

"The indexes for diesel fuel, fresh and dry vegetables, jet fuel, residential electric power and crude petroleum also rose," it added.

A day prior, government data showed that the consumer price index — a key gauge of inflation — climbed more than expected to 3.7 per cent in September.

While price increases may not lock in a second consecutive interest rate hike this month by the US central bank, the odds of higher rates to tamp down inflation have climbed.

With a second straight day of "higher-than-expected inflation numbers, it seems the Fed will have no choice but to raise rates again this year", said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer of Northlight Asset Management.

Even though US consumer spending appears to be holding up, analysts expect household behaviour to reflect the growing pinch from rising costs.

A separate Commerce Department report showed Thursday that retail sales grew by 0.8 per cent month-on-month in September to $745 billion. This was slower than the 1.3 per cent pace in August.

The numbers, adjusted for seasonal changes but not inflation, likely reflect the sharp price hikes in energy costs too.

"That headline figure doesn't tell us much about the health of the consumer, as it was almost entirely driven by a price-related jump in gasoline spending," said Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics.

He expects consumers will lose steam heading into the year-end holiday shopping season, bogged down by higher prices.

Sales continued to rise at restaurants and bars, by 1.1 per cent, likely due to spending by higher-income households, Pearce said.

Sales sharply rose at gasoline stations by 6.4 per cent.

Excluding gasoline stations, however, retail sales rose a tepid 0.2 per cent.

"The moderation in core retail sales, along with a sharp pullback in auto sales, suggests that real consumer spending was likely flat in September," Nationwide Chief Economist Kathy Bostjancic warned in a note.

Stripping out auto sales and that at gasoline stations, overall retail sales was also just up by 0.2 per cent from the prior month.

"The key to sustaining resilient spending will be the health of the labour and equity markets. If the unemployment rate remains low, meaning consumers have a job, they will continue to spend, even if more cautiously," Bostjancic said.

## AMMAN STOCK EXCHANGE

AMMAN (JT) — Amman Stock Exchange (ASE) trading value for Thursday amounted to JD12.2 million spread over 4.4 million shares that traded through 4,816 transactions.

The ASE share price index shed 0.2 per cent, closing at 4213.75 points.

Out of 106 companies whose shares were traded, the share price of 22 companies rose while the share price of another 50 declined.

Topping the list of the companies whose shares gained the most were Al Rakaez Investment Company by 3.51 per cent, Al Tahdith for Real Estate Investments Company by 2.74 per cent, Jordanian Real Estate Company for Development by 2.67 per cent, Philadelphia Pharmaceuticals by 2.56 per cent, and First Jordan Investment Company Plc. by 2.50 per cent.

The companies whose shares dropped the most were Jordan Investment and Transport Company by 4.81 per cent, Al Shamekha for Real Estate and Financial Investments by 4.44 per cent, Afaq Holding for Investment and Real Estate Development Company Plc. by 4.44 per cent, Arab International Hotels by 3.85 per cent and Darat Jordan Holdings by 3.70 per cent.



# SPORTS AT A GLANCE

## FOOTBALL

### Newcastle boss Jaissle says Fernandez-Pardo just needs a goal

LONDON (AFP) — Matthias Jaissle is convinced £51 million ($67.5 million) summer signing Matias Fernandez-Pardo just needs a goal to launch his Newcastle career. The 21-year-old forward has yet to open his account since a deadline-day transfer from French club Lille last month, and he missed a couple of chances during a 4-1 Premier League defeat at Coventry on Monday. Fernandez-Pardo has been used down the middle despite belief that he could be better suited on the wing. But the Newcastle boss believes a goal could transform the fortunes of the 21-year-old Belgian, with Newcastle next in action at home to Aston Villa on Saturday. "Young lads coming into the Premier League for the first time need adaptation time," Jaissle told reporters on Thursday."I got the recommendation that I should be patient for at least half a year until winter with these lads. But I'm glad that we're seeing Matias in situations where he's bringing the principles on the pitch and creating the chances.

## TENNIS

### Alcaraz to play in Vienna after Saudi postponement

PARIS (AFP) — The Vienna ATP event said on Thursday it had added world number three Carlos Alcaraz to the tournament's line-up, pouncing when a Saudi Arabian exhibition event was cancelled. "When indications emerged on Wednesday that the Six Kings Slam... would be postponed until the end of December, tournament director Herwig Straka reacted immediately and contacted Carlos Alcaraz's management," Vienna organisers said in a statement."Everything happened very quickly after that and Carlos agreed to come to Vienna without much hesitation," said Straka."His commitment is a tremendous honour for our tournament."The lucrative Six Kings Slam exhibition, originally scheduled for October 21-24 and to be streamed live by Netflix, was postponed after Yemen's Houthis carried out deadly attacks on the kingdom. Organisers now hope to hold the tournament on December 27-30. US Open champion Alexander Zverev, Alex de Minaur and Learner Tien had already planned to play in Saudi Arabia and then in Vienna, which starts on October 26.

# Faisali bounce back with commanding victory over Al Nahda

By Rayan Jaafra



Photo courtesy of AFC

Faisli defeated Al Nahda 2-0 in their round two of group C match

AMMAN — Faisali bounced back in style on Wednesday evening at the Amman International Stadium, securing a convincing 2–0 victory over Oman's Al Nahda in their second-round Group C encounter of the AFC Champions League Two.

Blue eagles entered the tie seeking redemption after their thrilling 4–3 defeat against Qatar's Al Rayyan in the opening round, eager to reestablish their continental credentials on home turf.

Ahoua opened his account in the 29th minute, breaking the deadlock after latching onto a precise through-pass from Ahmad Ersan before delicately lobbing the ball over Ibrahim Al Rushaidi into the net, driving the home supporters crazy in the stands.

The Omani side attempted to mount a response following the goal, but coach Tareq Mustafa's defensive setup proved up to the task and remained impenetrable throughout the crucial phases of the match.

### Ersan shines Again

Faisali doubled their advantage in the 75th minute when the Brazilian Mardona slipped a clever through-pass into space. Jordanian Pro League top goal scorer Ahmad Ersan sprinted onto the ball with pace before rocking a sharp, precise strike into the back of the net to put the contest well beyond reach and secure Faisali's first win of the group stage.

The clean-sheet victory injects crucial momentum into Faisali's continental campaign, proving decisive after their opening-round setback and reinforcing their tactical focus under pressure.

### The standings now

Following these results, Saudi Arabia's Al Taawoun top Group C with four points, followed by Qatar's Al Rayyan in second with three points, Faisali in third with three points and Al Nahda at the bottom of the group with one point.

Faisali now turn their attention to host group leaders Al Taawoun at the Amman International Stadium on October 28 in a crucial fixture that could put them top of the group.



# 'Great to be back!' Harry, Meghan in first joint outing since UK return



AFP photo

Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, decorate birthday cupcakes during a visit to Epic Partners in Nottingham, central England, on Thursday

NOTTINGHAM, United Kingdom (AFP) — Britain's Prince Harry and his wife on Thursday carried out their first joint engagement since their surprise move back to the UK in August, with Meghan telling well-wishers: "It's great to be back."

King Charles III's 42-year-old younger son and Meghan, 45 — who left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a bitter royal family feud — were greeted with cheers as they arrived in the central English city of Nottingham.

The couple then stopped to chat and joke with the crowd as well as pose for selfies, give hugs and accept flowers.

The quasi-royal visit potentially puts the pair at odds with Buckingham Palace over their status while living back in Britain.

The king made it clear in a letter released last month that their position was "akin to private citizens" with charitable interests rather than public figures and that they should not be addressed as his and her royal highness.

Known formally as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, the last time Harry and Meghan appeared together at a public event in Britain was when they attended the late Queen Elizabeth II's funeral in September 2022.

Meghan, dressed in a long burgundy winter coat and wearing her hair in a ponytail, at one point kissed a woman on the cheek after she presented her with a gift.

Harry, in a dark suit and open-necked white shirt, bent down to speak to one youngster and told the crowd it was "very nice" to see everyone.

The couple were in the city to visit three charities that support young people and local communities through music, film, sport and tackling food poverty.

### Family rift

Following a spectacular falling out with the rest of the royal family, Harry and Meghan have sought to build bridges with Charles — but they remain estranged from Harry's older brother and heir to the throne, Prince William.

King Charles meanwhile visited Wales, where he addressed the Welsh parliament.

Anti-monarchy protesters could be heard chanting "Not my King" and "Down, down, down with the Crown" as Charles and Queen Camilla arrived, according to reports.

Charles, who was known as the Prince of Wales until his accession to the throne, has long had a close association with the country, one of the four territories that make up the United Kingdom.

Harry and Meghan settled in California six years ago, but in a surprise move in August they returned to live in the United Kingdom with their two young children, Archie, seven, and Lilibet, five.

### Private citizens

The late Queen Elizabeth II made it clear to Harry and Meghan before her death in 2022 that there was no "half-in/half-out" option under which they could pursue commercial ventures while being working royals.

A letter issued last month by the Lord Chamberlain, the most senior official in the Royal Household, said it was "well known that in January 2020 the Duke and Duchess stepped down from undertaking representative duties on behalf of the sovereign and are no longer working members of the royal family".

"Working royals" are members of the royal family who carry out official duties on behalf of the monarch. They receive administrative and other support from the Royal Household to do so.

There are currently seven senior working royals — King Charles and Queen Camilla; son and heir Prince William and his wife Catherine, Princess of Wales; Charles's sister Princess Anne, brother Edward and the latter's wife Sophie.

Other working royals include several of the late Queen Elizabeth II's cousins.



AFP photo

Duane Davis arrives for his sentencing hearing in the 1996 killing of rapper Tupac Shakur, at Clark County District Court at the Regional Justice Center in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Tuesday

# Duane Davis sentenced to minimum 40 years for Tupac killing

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Duane Davis, the former Los Angeles gang leader who boasted in books and interviews of his involvement in the killing of rapper Tupac Shakur, only to deny it when he came to trial, was sentenced to a minimum 40 years in prison on Tuesday.

"You don't get to take a man from his family. You don't get to take his very life, his whole future from him, and just walk away from it. Especially when that man is Tupac Shakur," Judge Carli Kierny told a Las Vegas court as she handed down the 40-years-to-life sentence.

Shakur was a key figure in a hip-hop rivalry pitting the US East Coast against the West Coast and was just 25 when he was gunned down in Las Vegas.

A trial heard how Davis, the one-time leader of the South Side Compton Crips, ordered the September 7, 1996 killing of the hip-hop artist after his own nephew had been beaten by members of Shakur's entourage at a Las Vegas casino.

About two hours after the casino confrontation, the "California Love" artist was shot by a gunman in a white Cadillac that pulled up at a red light alongside the BMW in which the rapper was riding in the front passenger seat.

Davis handed the gun to someone sitting in the back seat of the Cadillac and ordered that person to shoot Shakur, who died six days later.

Davis is the only person who was in the Cadillac that evening who is still alive.

