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# Sierra Leone's Bio succeeds Tinubu as ECOWAS Chairman

By Friday Omosola



**P**resident Julius Maada Bio of Sierra Leone on Sunday took over as the new Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

He succeeded President Bola Tinubu, who ruled for a two-term tenure leading the West African bloc.

The formal handover ceremony took place during the 67th Ordinary Session of the Authority, convened in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.

This development put to rest

earlier speculation that Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye might have been chosen for the role during private discussions preceding the main session.

In his inaugural address, Mr Bio outlined his administration's core priorities for the regional body.

These include a renewed focus on reinforcing constitutional governance and fostering deeper democratic principles, invigorating collaborative efforts in regional security, unlocking greater economic

integration among member states, and bolstering the credibility of ECOWAS institutions.

Mr Tinubu initially assumed the ECOWAS chairmanship on July 9, 2023, in Guinea-Bissau, and was re-elected for a second term in Abuja exactly one year later on July 7, 2024.

His re-election was a collective decision by regional leaders to ensure continuity in addressing key objectives related to security, reconciliation, and broader development within the community.

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## EFFECTIVE FROM DECEMBER 1, 2024

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10X4	206,890.50
10X3	179,608.00
9X6	254,977.00
9X5	225,738.00
9X4	193,500.00
9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
5X3	66,875.00
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8X3	98,500.00
7X4	164,002.00
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6X2	47,500.00
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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
5X6	98,749.50
5X4	65,833.00
5X3	49,375.00
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8X3	N/A
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# Eliminate elements of Boko Haram insurgency, Tinubu tells security agencies

By Damilola Olufemi



**P**resident Bola Tinubu has called on Nigeria's security agencies to step up operations aimed at eliminating the remaining elements of the Boko Haram insurgency, following a deadly suicide bombing in Konduga, Borno State.

In a statement issued on Sunday by his Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, Bayo Onanuga, Tinubu expressed deep sorrow over the attack, describing it as "cowardly." He extended condolences to the Borno State government and residents, and instructed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to assist those injured.

"The President mourned those who lost their lives in the tragic incident and condemned the act of violence as cowardly," the statement read. "He urged security agencies to intensify their efforts in flushing out the remnants of Boko Haram insurgents

who now target soft spots in a bid to divert attention."

The blast occurred Friday night around 9:30 pm at the Tashan Kifi area, known as the fish market, in Konduga town. A female suicide bomber reportedly detonated an explosive device amid a crowded local food market.

Though eyewitnesses claimed over 20 people lost their lives and more than a dozen others were injured, the Borno State Police Command reported lower figures. According to ASP Daso Kenneth, "We received a distress call around 10 pm. A female suicide bomber with IEDs infiltrated the market and detonated the explosives, killing 10 and injuring several others. Emergency teams evacuated the injured to hospitals in Maiduguri."

Tinubu sympathises with Kano

In a separate but similarly tragic

incident, President Tinubu also sympathised with victims of an explosion that rocked the Gidan Karfe area of Kano State on Saturday morning. The blast, which occurred at a scrap metal facility, claimed five lives and left 10 others wounded.

According to preliminary findings, explosive materials concealed in scrap transported from Yobe State may have triggered the blast.

"President Tinubu stressed the critical need for workplace safety and urged relevant government agencies to thoroughly investigate the incident," the statement said.

Kano State Commissioner of Police, Ibrahim Bakori, who visited the site shortly after the explosion, confirmed the casualties and noted that emergency services responded swiftly to the scene, calming initial fears among residents.



# Stop the blame game, act on insecurity – Ortom tells Alia

By **Gbenga Olaleye**

**F**ormer Governor of Benue State, Chief Samuel Ortom, has called on his successor, Governor Hyacinth Alia, to stop shifting blame and instead focus on tackling the growing insecurity in the state, in line with the roadmap presented by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu during his recent visit.

This was contained in a statement issued on Sunday by Ortom's media aide, Terver Akase, who accused Governor Alia of persistently dragging the former governor's name into issues unrelated to him.

"We read a statement by Governor Alia through his Chief Press Secretary, where he once again turned attention to Ortom, even though the matter had nothing to do with the former governor," Akase said.

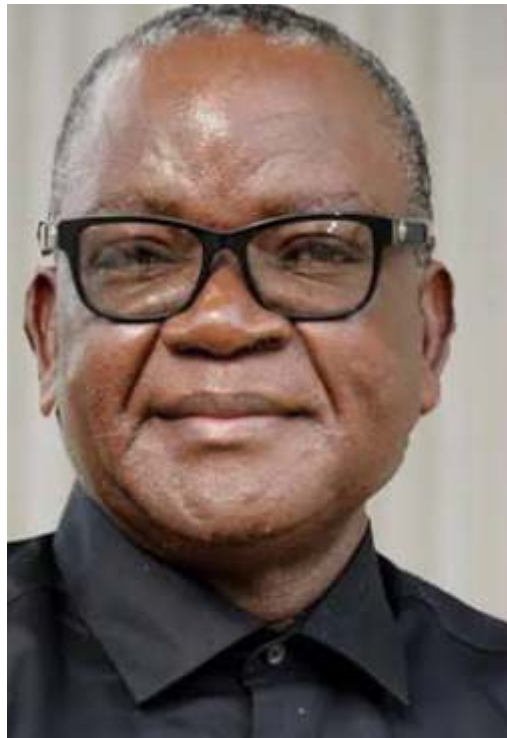
"Governor Alia and his aides are so obsessed with Ortom's name that they bring him up at every opportunity. This blame game must stop.

Akase dismissed Governor Alia's recent claim that over four million people were displaced during Ortom's administration, describing it as false.

He clarified that the Ortom-led government had developed a reliable data system for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), in collaboration with both national and international agencies, including NEMA, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the ICRC.

"The same figure of 1.5 million IDPs that Governor Alia now uses was handed over to him by Ortom's administration," the statement added.

Akase further accused the Alia administration of playing politics with the lives of Benue people, who continue to face violent attacks from armed herders.



"People are dying like animals in villages, but the government is playing down the number of deaths and displacement," he said.

Referring to President Tinubu's recent visit to Benue, Akase urged the governor to begin implementing the recommendations provided by the president.

"It has been five days since the President visited and advised Governor Alia on what to do. Why is there no action yet?"

He also referenced a protest held by hundreds of IDPs in Makurdi, who accused the government of abandoning them. Akase questioned the priorities of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), criticising the agency's Executive Secretary for reportedly attending a lavish wedding in the United Kingdom amid the crisis at home.

The statement called on the governor to allow the state's 23 local

government councils to manage their own funds, citing a Supreme Court judgement granting full financial autonomy to local governments.

"Allocations to LGs have increased by 400% since fuel subsidy was removed. Let them use their money to improve security and development," Akase argued.

He concluded with a warning that Ortom's camp would no longer remain silent in the face of what he described as politically motivated attacks.

"Chief Ortom is no longer the governor; he played his role and stepped aside. The mantle of leadership now rests with the current governor. If Governor Alia and his administration are out of their depth in handling the security challenges in the state, they should publicly admit their incapacity and call stakeholders for help, as President Tinubu also counselled recently, rather than throwing canisters at imaginary opponents," the statement said.

# Tinubu urges swift activation of ECOWAS standby force

By Friday Omosola



**P**resident Bola Tinubu has expressed concern over the slow pace of activating the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force.

He urged West African leaders to move decisively from planning to implementation in the fight against terrorism and transnational crime.

He spoke at the opening of the 67th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja.

Mr Tinubu, in one of his final engagements as chairman of the 50-year-old regional bloc, emphasised the urgent need to operationalise the force amid growing insecurity in the region.

“The ECOWAS Standby Force must move from concept to operational reality. I am a little bit worried about the slow pace of its activation, which is taking longer than desired,” he said.

Mr Tinubu stressed that the threats facing West Africa are cross-border in

nature and orchestrated by complex and ruthless networks that do not respect national boundaries.

He called for greater political will, improved coordination, and a unified strategy to ensure regional security.

“No single nation can, therefore, address these challenges alone. We must strengthen coordination, amplify political will, and prioritise a collective approach to secure it,” he added.

Highlighting achievements during his tenure, Mr Tinubu pointed to the completed ECOWAS Military Logistics Depot in Lungi, Sierra Leone, which he said will provide essential support to regional military operations.

He also noted that Nigeria has committed to sea-lift and air-lift logistics for ECOWAS following the signing of the Sixth Agreement with the African Union earlier this year in Addis Ababa.

The President expressed optimism

that continued diplomatic efforts with Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger—countries that had withdrawn from ECOWAS—could lead to their eventual return.

“Under my chairmanship, I deployed all diplomatic means to engage and dialogue with our brothers in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. I am confident that before too long, they may return to the family,” he stated.

Mr Tinubu also called for greater economic integration in the region, urging leaders to remove trade barriers, empower the private sector, and implement major infrastructure projects such as the West African Gas Pipeline, the West African Power Pool, and the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor Highway.

“Our intra-regional trade remains low, even as we possess the potential to be an economic powerhouse. We must create the enabling environment, empower the private sector, and create the conditions necessary for innovation to flourish,” he said.



# ADA will boost Tinubu's 2027 re-election – APC's Okechukwu

By Friday Omosola

A founding member of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr Osita Okechukwu, has expressed support for the proposed registration of a new political platform, the All Democratic Alliance (ADA), stating that it could inadvertently strengthen President Bola Tinubu's chances of securing a second term in 2027.

Speaking to journalists on Sunday, Okechukwu said the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should grant approval for ADA's registration, noting that a multi-party system is essential for Nigeria's democracy.

"My take on the formation of the All Democratic Alliance (ADA) is that it is a welcome development," Okechukwu stated.

"One, because I am an apostle of a multi-party system, which allows all the flowers to blossom and all the voices to be heard."

Okechukwu, a former Director-General of the Voice of Nigeria (VON), added that ADA's emergence would not pose a threat to the APC, but rather help galvanise support for Tinubu, especially among politically astute electorates in the North.

"Methinks sincerely that the ADA, contrary to their promoters' success mindset, will enhance our party's victory, especially President Tinubu's second term," he said.

The National Opposition Coalition Group, in a letter dated 19 June and signed by Chief Akin A. Rickets and Abdullahi Elayo, formally applied to INEC for ADA's registration.

The coalition is rumoured to have the backing of former Vice President



Atiku Abubakar, former Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai, and other key opposition figures.

Okechukwu, however, downplayed the potential threat, criticising what he called a "false premise" among ADA promoters that the northern electorate could be easily swayed based on regional sentiments.

"They assume the northern electorate are quartered in dormitories and will be hauled to polling booths to vote for a would-be northern candidate. As if either they forget or deliberately ignore that the northern electorate are among the most sophisticated in our political landscape," he said.

Responding to claims that the North is disillusioned with Tinubu's presidency, Okechukwu pointed to major infrastructure and development projects being carried out across the country, including in northern states.

He also dismissed what he called a "fraudulent calculation" by ADA supporters that, by 2027, the South would have ruled Nigeria for 17

years and the North for only 11. He argued that such reasoning overlooks the North's historical dominance in leadership since independence.

"That the North has presided over Nigeria more than the South was the premise on which patriotic politicians established the rotation convention in 1999 — that the presidency should rotate between North and South," he added.

Addressing the possibility of ADA nominating a southern presidential candidate, Okechukwu expressed doubts about their ability to unite opposition parties.

"Even if they respect the rotation convention and float a southern candidate, one is afraid that their huge appetite for power will becloud their vision and broadmindedness to accommodate folks in PDP, APGA, NNPP, and Labour Party," he said.

INEC has not yet issued a formal response regarding ADA's application for registration



# Oyo APC slams Makinde over N63.5bn Agodi govt House renovation plan

By Damilola Olufemi

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in Oyo State has slammed Governor Seyi Makinde for his administration's decision to allocate a hefty N63.5 billion towards the renovation of the Agodi Government House, describing the plan as an outrageous show of "profligacy, insensitivity, and impunity."

The party argued that such spending could place unnecessary strain on the state's economy and questioned the priorities of the state government.

The controversial announcement came last week when the State Executive Council revealed that it had approved the large-scale refurbishment of the Government House. This was accompanied by an additional N132 million to hire professional gardeners for maintaining the greenery around the governor's residence.

Also included in the latest approvals was a separate N14.3 billion for the procurement of an Instrument Landing System (ILS) for the Ladoke Akintola Airport in Ibadan.

In a statement issued over the weekend, APC's state Publicity Secretary, Olawale Sadare, criticised the governor for what the party called a pattern of poor financial judgment and disregard for public sentiment. "All he could do to defend the reckless spending in the name of Government House renovation was to announce another plan to purchase two aircraft for him to monitor criminals from the airspace," the statement read.

The APC said public backlash had grown both locally and internationally, with many expressing outrage over what they called another instance of wasteful governance. "We watched keenly as concerned individuals and groups across the globe condemned the decision of Gov. Makinde to record another ugly stride in his penchant for financial recklessness and wasting of public funds through the payment of huge sums on white elephant projects and misplaced priorities," the party noted.

The party also referred to past concerns about government spending, citing a 2019 procurement of 212,505 exercise books for public school students that allegedly cost N2,100 each. According to the APC, this is part of a growing pattern of mismanagement under the Makinde administration.



Critics within the party also questioned the need to spend billions on structures that had already undergone renovations under former Governor Abiola Ajimobi in 2017. "All that played out in Gov. Makinde's official address to the state lawmakers was a futile attempt to cover up a case of brazen corruption and impunity," the party alleged.

Further concerns were raised about the potential duplication of contracts related to the ongoing Alakia Airport upgrade. According to the APC, the governor had previously allocated N10 billion to the same project and is now committing an additional N14.3 billion, which the party believes may point to "a criminal case of contract splitting."

On the governor's suggestion to acquire new aircraft for security surveillance, the party warned that such purchases might serve as a cover for financial misconduct. "The best thing which Gov. Makinde would do is to pay for two new aeroplanes and then bring one tokunboh private jet which would move him and his cronies around the world at the expense of the masses," the statement said.

The APC urged the governor to rethink his strategy, asserting that aircraft are not what Oyo State needs right now. "What the state needs to combat crime is synergy among stakeholders, motivation of security agents and deployment of relevant technologies," the party stated.

Makinde defends figure

Makinde has defended the controversial N63.4 billion earmarked for the renovation of the Government House, attributing the high cost to Nigeria's volatile exchange rate and broader economic instability.

The figure, which has sparked criticism and debate among citizens and stakeholders, was addressed by the governor during a special session of the State House of Assembly to commemorate its second anniversary.

Governor Makinde explained that the project's cost is a reflection of the current naira-dollar exchange rate, noting that fluctuations in the currency market have significantly impacted financial planning across the board.

He said, "Our economy is bearing the brunt of a weak naira. When we assumed office, monthly repayment on our foreign debt stood at N700 million. Today, we are repaying N3 billion monthly."

He pointed out that a major portion of the state's foreign debt, currently above N300 billion, stems from a \$200 million World Bank loan inherited from the previous administration under late Governor Abiola Ajimobi. According to Makinde, the loan was secured when the exchange rate was around N350 to a dollar, translating then to roughly N70 billion.

"But due to the depreciation of the naira, that same loan now requires far more in repayment terms," he said.

# Tinubu urges West Africa to convert demographic strength, mineral wealth into jobs

By Friday Omosola



**P**resident Bola Tinubu has called on West African leaders to harness the region's demographic strength and vast mineral resources to drive industrialisation, innovation, and job creation.

Speaking yesterday at the opening of the inaugural West Africa Economic Summit (WAES) in Abuja, President Tinubu described West Africa's youthful population as its greatest asset but warned that this advantage could become a liability without deliberate investments in education, digital infrastructure, and enterprise.

"This demographic promise can quickly become a liability if not matched by investments in education, digital infrastructure, innovation, and productive enterprise," the president cautioned.

Highlighting Nigeria's ongoing investments in skills development, digital connectivity, and youth empowerment, Mr Tinubu stressed the importance of regional cooperation, arguing that prosperity in the region hinges on shared infrastructure and economic frameworks.

"No one country can do this alone. Our prosperity depends on regional supply chains, energy networks, and data frameworks. We must design them

together—or they will collapse separately," he said.

The Nigerian leader, who also chairs the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, urged West African nations to dismantle trade barriers and improve economic integration, lamenting that intra-regional trade remains below 10 per cent.

"We must coordinate or collapse," he said, calling for urgent reforms to enhance cross-border trade and connectivity.

On the need to move beyond raw exports, President Tinubu called for investment in value-added industries powered by the region's mineral wealth.

He urged leaders to shift from a "pit-to-port" economy and prioritise local processing and regional manufacturing.

"Our rare minerals power tomorrow's green technologies, yet being resource-rich is not enough; we must also become value-chain smart," he said.

"The era of 'pit to port' must end. We must turn our mineral wealth into domestic economic value—jobs, technology, and manufacturing."

He also emphasised the role of the private sector in transforming the region's economy, noting that the government's role is to create a stable, market-friendly environment.

"The fundamental transformation will not come solely from the government, but from unleashing our people's entrepreneurial spirit," Mr Tinubu stated.

He urged summit participants—including heads of state, business leaders, and development partners—to commit to concrete deliverables that would make the region more competitive, investable, and inclusive.

"Let us emerge from this summit with actionable outcomes: a renewed commitment to ease of doing business, enhanced intra-regional trade, improved infrastructure connectivity, and innovative ideas that move our people from poverty to prosperity," he said.

The summit drew participation from key regional stakeholders, with discussions focused on boosting trade, investment, digital growth, and infrastructure development across West Africa.



# Aiyedatiwa nominates four additional commissioners

By Friday Omosola

**G**overnor Lucky Aiyedatiwa of Ondo State has submitted the names of four additional commissioner nominees to the State House of Assembly for confirmation.

He disclosed this in a statement by Ebenezer Adeniyi, his Chief Press Secretary.

This latest nomination, conveyed in a letter dated 21 June 2025, brings the total number of cabinet nominees to 16, following the governor's earlier submission of 12 names last week, who are currently undergoing screening by the House.

In the letter addressed to the Speaker, Olamide Oladiji, Mr Aiyedatiwa cited Section 192 (1&2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) as the legal basis for his action.



The new nominees are, Pastor Bola Ademuwagun, Engr. Leye Akinola, Dr Banji Awolowo Ajaka and Adesoji Afolabi.

The governor urged the Assembly to act swiftly on the request 'in the overall interest of the state.'

# Sanwo-Olu hosts APC stakeholders ahead of Lagos LG polls

By Gbenga Olaleye

**G**overnor Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State has scheduled a stakeholders' parley with party leaders and candidates in preparation for the upcoming Local Government Elections set for 12 July.

The announcement was made by the All Progressives Congress (APC) Publicity Secretary for Lagos State, Mr Seye Oladejo, in a statement issued on Sunday.

According to Oladejo, the meeting will convene APC leaders, elected and appointed officials, alongside all candidates vying for office under the party's platform. The event is slated to take place at the State House, Marina.

"The meeting will serve as the rallying point for the mobilisation of our troops towards the local government elections," Oladejo stated.

He further expressed gratitude for the



continued support and trust residents have placed in the APC's progressive ideals, which he attributed to Lagos State's significant growth in sectors such as education, primary healthcare, housing, and social interventions.

"We're confident that the landmark achievements of our local government councils will be rewarded with massive votes at the polls for all our candidates,"

Oladejo added.

Earlier this week, the APC officially presented flags to its 57 chairmanship and 376 councillorship candidates, marking the commencement of the party's campaign for the elections. The flag-off ceremony was held at the APC State Secretariat in Ogba.



# Nigeria, Benin sign integration deal as Tinubu, Talon lead push for West African reforms

By Friday Omosola

**N**igeria and the Republic of Benin have signed a landmark bilateral agreement to deepen integration between the two countries and set a model for broader regional cooperation within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The agreement was formalised during the inaugural West Africa Economic Summit (WAES) held in Abuja, with Nigerian President Bola Tinubu and his Beninese counterpart, Patrice Talon, in attendance.

Nigeria's Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole, and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu, signed on behalf of Nigeria.

Benin was represented by its Minister of Industry and Trade, Shadiya Alimatou Assouman, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Shegun Adjadi Bakari.

Speaking at the ceremony, President Talon described the agreement as a bold and practical step toward achieving real regional integration.

"President Tinubu and I have agreed on full integration between Benin and Nigeria. The responsibility now lies with our ministers to implement it. Benin and Nigeria are more than twins — we are the same people. Let us show the region that integration is possible," he said.

Mr Talon decried the stalled progress of ECOWAS, calling for urgent reforms to rescue the regional body from what he termed a state of crisis.

"ECOWAS is a perfect example of regional integration. Unfortunately, our ECOWAS is in crisis right now," he stated.

The Beninese leader cited failed initiatives such as the West African Gas Pipeline and the underperforming West African Power Pool as evidence of systemic inefficiencies.

Due to administrative bottlenecks, he revealed that Benin now sources gas from Qatar using a floating storage and regasification unit.

Mr Talon also lamented the poor logistics along the Lagos–Abidjan Corridor, where multiple checkpoints and harassment delay trade.

"A businessman should be able to travel



from Lagos to Abidjan in hours — not days — without facing harassment. That is not integration," he said.

He warned that poverty remained the most dangerous threat to regional peace and democracy, insisting that only deeper economic integration could address it.

"If we do not address poverty through integration, our values will remain hollow."

Mr Talon also urged African nations to prioritise their interests in light of shifting global trade dynamics.

"The trade war should remind us that nations act in their interest, and so should we. At some point, we may even have to thank President Trump for that reminder."

"If we cannot create wealth and opportunity, all our other values — democracy, liberty — cannot be sustained. Integration must be real. Integration must be delivered."

The summit featured national statements from the Presidents of Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as video messages from UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and World Trade Organisation Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

Liberian President Joseph Boakai

reaffirmed his country's commitment to ECOWAS and other regional blocs, stressing the need to remove trade barriers and harmonise policies.

He praised Mr Tinubu's leadership in convening a "timely and strategic" summit.

Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio emphasised the urgency of unlocking the region's economic potential amid challenges such as climate change, debt, and food insecurity.

He called for stronger political will and accelerated implementation of trade policies such as the ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme and the Common External Tariff.

President Bio also reiterated support for a single regional currency.

"To deepen intra-regional competitiveness, we must accelerate progress toward monetary union," he said.

The summit set the stage for the 67th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, scheduled on Sunday, 22 June 2025, at the State House Conference Centre in Abuja.

# Mutfwang visits attacked Bokkos communities, assures displaced residents of govt support

By Friday Omosola

**G**overnor Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau State has paid a humanitarian visit to displaced residents in Mushere and Tangor communities of Bokkos Local Government Area, following a spate of deadly terrorist attacks in the area.

During the visit, Mr Mutfwang commiserated with families affected by the violence and reaffirmed his administration's commitment to their welfare, safety, and long-term recovery.

He assured Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) that no household in distress would be neglected, particularly in this period of mourning and trauma.

The governor's visit came in the aftermath of renewed attacks by armed groups on innocent villagers, which led to multiple fatalities and the destruction of homes and livelihoods.

In response, he directed officials to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment to facilitate the timely delivery of relief items, especially for women and children.

Addressing hundreds of IDPs in Mushere, Mr Mutfwang praised the resilience of the affected communities and acknowledged the strategic importance of the area.

"We are here in Mushere, a community that has endured relentless and vicious onslaughts over the past three weeks. I salute the resilience of the people and commend the youth for their collaboration with security agencies in defending this land," he said.



He accused the attackers of attempting to gain access to other regions through Mushere, but vowed that the government would not allow the community to fall.

The governor also urged youths to avoid destructive behaviours such as drug abuse and alcoholism, stressing their critical role in rebuilding the state.

"Our youth are our treasure. We need you now more than ever. Let us not be divided at heart," he added.

Mr Mutfwang condemned reports of betrayal by individuals allegedly compromising local security and warned that those found culpable would face legal consequences.

Later in Tangor, the governor extended condolences to the Makai Tangor and families of victims of the recent attacks, describing the killings as shocking and tragic.

"We mourn with you and pray for God's comfort and strength to bear this loss," he said.

Mr Mutfwang pledged that no part of the state would be neglected in the government's ongoing security and development efforts, noting the special support he previously received from the community during his political journey.

He also conveyed the condolences and backing of President Bola Tinubu, adding that the Federal Government was collaborating with the state to restore lasting peace.

Efforts are underway, he said, to reinforce the security presence in affected communities, deploy additional personnel, and improve rural mobility by providing motorcycles and rehabilitating key access roads.

Responding to the governor's visit, the District Head of Horop, Miskaham Jonah Dawum, called for permanent security outposts in vulnerable areas and proposed the creation of a Joint Taskforce between Plateau and Nasarawa States to pursue cross-border criminal elements.



# Lamido: Tinubu backed June 12 annulment, NADECO was not for Abiola

By Gbenga Olaleye



**F**ormer Governor of Jigawa State, Alhaji Sule Lamido, has stirred controversy with claims that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu was among those who backed the annulment of the historic June 12, 1993 presidential election.

Speaking during an interview on Arise TV on Saturday, Lamido alleged that both Tinubu and his late mother, Hajia Abibatu Mogaji, were supporters of the military regime of then-Head of State, General Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB), who infamously annulled what is widely regarded as Nigeria's freest and fairest election.

According to Lamido, Hajia Mogaji, a highly influential market leader in Lagos, mobilised market women to Abuja to publicly declare their loyalty to IBB in the wake of the annulment.

"Tinubu was part of those who supported IBB's annulment of the June 12 election," Lamido asserted.

"His own mother, Hajia Mogaji, was organising Lagos market women to come to Abuja to pledge support for Babangida."

Lamido, a founding member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), also challenged the historical narrative that links Tinubu and the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) with the struggle to validate the June 12 mandate.

He said: "I feel highly entertained by Tinubu's rhetoric, the way he's dramatising his role in Nigeria's democracy. Tinubu became relevant and noticeable after Abacha took over the government. Before then, he was just in the Senate and the secretary of his party."

He went further to claim that NADECO was not founded to defend the June 12 mandate won by the late Chief MKO Abiola but was instead a group formed in opposition to the late General Sani

Abacha's regime.

"NADECO was a postulation formation to fight Abacha, not for June 12," Lamido said.

The June 12, 1993 election, widely believed to have been won by the late Chief MKO Abiola, remains a pivotal moment in Nigeria's democratic history. Its annulment by Babangida sparked widespread protests and led to years of political instability, culminating in Abiola's arrest in 1994 and his death in detention in 1998.

President Tinubu, who was a member of NADECO and later went into exile during the Abacha regime, has long been celebrated by his supporters as a pro-democracy figure. Lamido's comments, however, challenge that legacy and are likely to provoke heated debate across Nigeria's political space.

As of press time, the Presidency has not issued a response to the allegations.



# Rivers: Ahoada east youths' assault LGA boss, force alleged resignation

By Gbenga Olaleye



Tensions escalated in Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State on Friday, as a disturbing video surfaced on social media showing the Sole Administrator, Goodluck Iheamacho, being physically assaulted by local youths amid accusations of corruption and political bias.

In the video, obtained, Iheamacho is seen being beaten with sticks and coerced into signing what appeared to be a resignation letter. Council Secretary, Alabi Umegbewe, was also visibly attacked during the altercation.

The letter, dated 20 June 2025 and widely circulated online, purportedly confirms Iheamacho's resignation. However, Iheamacho has publicly denied authoring the letter, calling it a fabrication and claiming he was attacked at the council premises by youths from the community.

In a statement released on Saturday, he insisted: "The resignation letter being shared on social media was not written by me. I was attacked and forced under duress."

Chief Security Officer of Ahoada East LGA, Hector Ekaikita, confirmed that a confrontation broke out at the council premises on Friday. According to Ekaikita, the altercation stemmed from accusations levelled against Iheamacho, including alleged financial mismanagement and perceived allegiance to the Simplified Movement — a political faction loyal to suspended Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

"The youths confronted him over a meeting with the Simplified Group and allegations of extravagant spending," Ekaikita said in a media interview.

"They cited claims that he had purchased properties worth N300 million and a luxury car valued at over N60 million."

Ekaikita described how the argument escalated into a physical struggle: "They exchanged words. The administrator pushed one of the youths, and they retaliated. That's when things got out of hand."

He also alleged that Iheamacho

voluntarily agreed to resign amid the standoff, stating: "He said he didn't want the position anymore. The youths prepared a letter, and he signed it without force."

However, the viral video contradicts this account, showing visible signs of intimidation during the signing.

The crisis is unfolding against a politically charged backdrop, with all 23 LGA sole administrators in Rivers State reportedly aligned with Minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Nyesom Wike — a rival of Governor Fubara.

Unconfirmed reports suggest the clash may also be tied to a dispute over the sharing of local government funds, with allegations that Iheamacho withheld financial resources from political allies who backed his appointment.

As of press time, no arrests have been made, and there is growing public concern over the deteriorating security and political tension in Rivers State's local councils.

# My life is under threat, Blaqbonez cries out amid Odumodublvck beef

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Popular Nigerian rapper Emeka Akumefule, better known by his stage name Blaqbonez, has made a disturbing claim that his life is under threat from unnamed individuals in the music industry.

The 29-year-old rapper took to social media to express his fears, stating that some powerful figures in the music scene have allegedly threatened to kill him.

The rapper's comment has sparked worry among fans and followers, especially after he hinted at an early exit from the industry.

Despite being at the peak of his career, Blaqbonez recently stated that he would not be active in the music business for up to 15 years. His remarks drew questions and reactions from fans who were surprised by such a declaration.

Social media exchange sparks concern  
The drama unfolded on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, after Blaqbonez posted that he does not plan to be in the music industry for the next 15 years. Given his young age and rising fame, the comment took many by surprise.

In reaction, a user with the handle @LfCPraise responded with concern, saying, "I no understand, no kpai o. Abeg." The phrase is a mix of Pidgin English and slang, essentially pleading with the artist not to die or leave prematurely.

Responding directly, Blaqbonez dropped a shocking reply: "Them say them go kill me, but I don record enough for 3 more albums, no fear, because rap actually hard for some people."

His message suggested that some individuals have threatened his life, possibly because of his presence and influence in the rap industry. Despite the threat, he assured fans that he had already recorded enough unreleased music to ensure his legacy would live on in case anything happened to him.

Fans react with panic and support



Following his revelation, many of Blaqbonez's fans expressed concern for his safety. While some urged him to speak out more clearly, others called on authorities and the music industry to investigate the matter seriously.

Many of his followers praised him for staying strong and planning by recording more music. Others encouraged him to take extra precautions and avoid potentially dangerous situations.

Although the rapper's comment was brief, its impact was deep. Fans began speculating about who might want to harm him and why. However, Blaqbonez did not disclose the identities of those allegedly behind the threats, choosing instead to remain vague.

No formal statement yet  
As of now, Blaqbonez has not released any official statement beyond his social media post. There has also been no confirmation from law enforcement or music industry representatives about any active threats against him.

Still, the rapper's followers continue to express hope that he is safe and receiving proper protection. Many have urged him to speak to the authorities or at least share more details if the threats are

serious.

A voice in Nigerian rap  
Blaqbonez is widely known for his unique style, humorous personality, and bold lyrics. Over the years, he has built a reputation as one of Nigeria's most outspoken rappers. His albums and singles have gained critical and commercial success, making him a strong voice in the Nigerian music industry.

Despite his playful image, the rapper has often addressed serious issues in his music, including competition, survival, and identity. This latest development has only increased the mystery surrounding his life and career.

Final words

The music industry in Nigeria, while thriving, has occasionally been marred by reports of rivalry, beefs, and internal conflicts. Blaqbonez's claims, though unverified, have added a new layer of tension.

For now, fans can only hope that the rapper remains safe and continues to create music without fear. His message serves as a reminder of the unseen pressures that often come with fame and success.



# Davido accuses nightclub security of murder attempt

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

Nigerian music star David Adeleke, popularly known as Davido, has accused security personnel at Ibiza, a popular nightclub on the Spanish island of Ibiza, of attempting to kill him and members of his team.

The incident reportedly occurred on Saturday night during what had been a celebratory vacation for the singer and his close associates.

Davido made the explosive allegation in a series of posts shared on his Instagram story in the early hours of Sunday. According to him, the nightclub's security team launched a violent attack against him and his crew without provocation.

“@hiibizaofficial security just tried to kill me and my team!!!” he wrote in a visibly angry tone.

In another post, he added, “All of y'all goin' down!!!”, an apparent vow to seek justice for the confrontation.

Although full details of what led to the incident remain unclear, Davido backed up his claim by sharing photos of some of the nightclub's security staff. In the images, the men appeared visibly aggressive and tense, adding weight to the artist's claim of harassment and endangerment.

## Vacation turns sour

Davido has been vacationing in Ibiza for the past few days along with close friends and team members. Those seen with him on the trip include his longtime manager, Asa Asika, and nightlife businessman, Cubana Chiefpriest.

The group had been documenting their luxurious getaway on social media, sharing snapshots of yacht rides, parties, and beach moments in the scenic Spanish city.

What was meant to be a relaxing holiday quickly spiralled into a dramatic episode. While Davido has not provided a detailed account of how the altercation began, his choice of words suggests that the incident was violent enough to leave



him feeling threatened for his life.

## Source: Instagram [Davido] Social media reacts

Following Davido's post, reactions flooded social media. Fans expressed outrage over the singer's experience, with many demanding that the Spanish authorities investigate the incident. Several users tagged the Hi Ibiza official page, calling for accountability from the nightclub's management.

Some commenters speculated that racism may have played a role in the alleged mistreatment of the Nigerian celebrity and his team, though this has not been confirmed. Others urged Davido to take legal action against the club if his claims could be substantiated.

## Ibiza yet to respond

As of the time of filing this report, Ibiza nightclub had not issued any official statement addressing the allegations. The nightclub is one of the most well-known party venues in Ibiza, attracting thousands of tourists, celebrities, and DJs from around the world each summer.

The Spanish authorities have also not released any public comment or report related to the incident. It is still unclear whether any formal complaint has been filed by Davido or his management team.

## Davido demands accountability

Davido, known for his outspoken nature and global music influence, insisted that those involved in the alleged attack would face consequences.

The award-winning artist, whose international fanbase stretches across continents, has used his platform on multiple occasions to speak out against injustice. This latest outburst is consistent with his tendency to publicly defend himself and his associates when they are wronged.

## Awaiting further developments

At the moment, key facts surrounding the confrontation remain vague. Questions such as what triggered the clash, whether police intervened, and whether any of the artist's crew sustained injuries remain unanswered.

However, Davido's bold public stance suggests that this story may develop further in the coming days. Fans and observers are closely watching for updates from the artist's camp, the nightclub, or Spanish law enforcement.

Until then, Davido's serious accusation against Hi Ibiza's security team continues to stir public concern and raises questions about the safety of African celebrities abroad.

# Avoid secular music, actress Eucharia Anunobi advises Christians

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**V**eteran Nollywood actress and evangelist, Eucharia Anunobi, has sparked conversations online following her strong advice to Christians about the music they listen to and the way they celebrate.

In a recent video posted to her TikTok page, the actress warned believers to stop dancing to secular music, stating that doing so is the same as “dancing with the devil.”

The seasoned actress, known for her bold personality and deep religious convictions, didn't mince words as she delivered her message. She urged Christians to choose gospel music instead of worldly songs when they feel the need to dance or celebrate.

“If you must club, club with Christ”

In the video, Anunobi addressed her viewers with passionate conviction, saying, “If you want to club, club with Christ. Stop dancing with the devil. I'm the catalyst here to awaken you to your new reality.”

She emphasised that a Christian's lifestyle should reflect their spiritual beliefs, including the kind of entertainment they enjoy. According to her, music carries spiritual weight, and the lyrics, rhythms, and themes of secular songs often promote values that are at odds with the Christian faith.

Anunobi, who has been vocal about moral and spiritual issues in recent years, encouraged her followers to find joy in God's presence and seek godly alternatives to popular culture. She insisted that true fun can be found in Christ, not in worldly pleasures.

The actress's journey from fame to faith

Eucharia Anunobi rose to fame in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a leading figure in Nigeria's film industry. Known for her dramatic roles and striking screen presence, she became a household name through movies like *Glamour Girls* and *Abuja Connection*. However, in the past decade, Anunobi



has shifted her focus from acting to ministry.

Now an ordained pastor, she often uses her social media platforms to preach and teach biblical values. Her messages regularly blend spiritual insight with strong moral positions, often sparking debates among her followers and critics alike.

Divided reactions from the public

As expected, Anunobi's latest comments have generated mixed reactions across social media. Some users praised her for standing firm in her beliefs and for calling out what they see as a growing moral decline among Christians. They argued that many believers today blend worldly lifestyles with spiritual commitments, and that her message is a timely wake-up call.

Others, however, criticised her stance, calling it extreme or unrealistic. They questioned whether dancing to secular music automatically equates to spiritual compromise, arguing that music, like many art forms, can be enjoyed responsibly and with discretion.

Still, Anunobi remained firm in her position, warning that many believers are unknowingly straying from their

faith by embracing habits that seem harmless on the surface. “You cannot serve two masters,” she hinted in another comment under the video. “Choose whom you will follow, the world or the Word.”

Encouraging a Christ-centred lifestyle Anunobi concluded her message by encouraging Christians to deepen their relationship with God and to be mindful of the choices they make daily. She said spiritual growth requires more than going to church or reading the Bible; it also means guarding one's heart, mind, and body from harmful influences, including music.

“Your dance should be an act of worship,” she said. “Let your joy reflect the glory of God, not the ways of the world.”

This is not the first time Eucharia Anunobi has stirred controversy with her views on Christian living. Yet, she remains unapologetic about her mission to challenge believers to live holy and purposeful lives.

As the debate continues online, one thing is clear: Anunobi's message has sparked a broader conversation about faith, music, and how Christians navigate modern culture.



# 'Do better, things are hard', Spyro urges Nigerian politicians at Gov Eno's rally

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**A**frobeats sensation Oludipe Oluwasanmi David, popularly known as Spyro, has made a heartfelt appeal to Nigerian politicians, urging them to rise to their responsibilities and ease the suffering of the people.

The singer voiced his concerns on Saturday, June 15, during his performance at a high-profile event held in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State. The occasion was a grand reception organised to officially welcome Governor Umo Eno into the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Spyro, known for his popular track "Who's Your Guy?", used the opportunity to speak directly to political officeholders present. He called for better leadership and immediate action to address the growing hardship many Nigerians are facing.

"Shout-out to His Excellency the Governor. It's an honour to be here today," Spyro said on stage. "I heard about the good things you are doing in the state, and we are so proud.

"So, I'm hoping that other leaders here can take leadership lessons from him and follow his footsteps. They should do better for us because things are not easy in the country. Please, make them do better for us."

**A call to action amid economic struggles**  
Spyro's comments struck a chord with many in the audience, especially as they echoed the frustrations of millions of Nigerians grappling with high living costs, unemployment, and economic uncertainty.

The singer's remarks were not just a tribute to Governor Eno's achievements but also a challenge to other political figures to emulate his efforts and become more responsive to the needs of the people.

**High-profile attendees**

The grand reception was attended by some of the country's most powerful political figures. Vice President Senator Kashim Shettima, who represented



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, was present at the event. Also in attendance were the National Chairman of the APC, Dr. Abdullahi Ganduje, and Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

Other top lawmakers and politicians were also present, reflecting the significance of the event not only for Akwa Ibom but also for the ruling party at the national level.

At least 24 governors from different parts of the country graced the occasion. These included governors from Cross River, Imo, Kwara, Kogi, Jigawa, Delta, Edo, Ebonyi, Lagos, Ogun, Sokoto, and Ondo States, among others.

**Celebrating Governor Eno's defection**  
Governor Umo Eno's official defection to the APC marked a major political shift in Akwa Ibom, a state traditionally dominated by the opposition. His move to join the ruling party was seen as a strategic decision that could reshape the political landscape in the South-South region.

During the reception, party leaders praised Governor Eno for his developmental efforts and pledged their support as he continues to lead the state.

Spyro's performance, which was meant to entertain, ended up delivering a

powerful message. His words reminded the leaders present that beyond politics and celebrations, there is real pain in the country, and it demands real solutions.

**Artists speaking out**

Spyro is one of several Nigerian artists using their platforms to speak on national issues. As influential figures, musicians often reflect public sentiment through their songs, interviews, and stage appearances.

In recent times, more artists have begun speaking openly about governance, poverty, and social justice, showing that the creative industry can also play a role in pushing for accountability and change.

**Conclusion**

Spyro's bold message to Nigerian politicians may have been brief, but it captured the mood of many citizens. As the country continues to face tough times, voices like his serve as a reminder that leadership must be people-focused and responsive.

With the eyes of the nation watching, the question remains: will those in power listen, and act?

# Femi branch barred from leaving set after alleged assault

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**V**eteran Nollywood actor Femi Branch found himself at the centre of controversy after he was reportedly prevented from leaving a movie location for allegedly slapping a crew member.

A video of the incident, which surfaced on social media and has since gone viral, shows Branch being blocked at the exit gate of the movie set.

Security personnel and some of the film crew, including colleagues of the assaulted assistant director, formed a human barricade, insisting that he must return to complete the shoot.

Altercation turns ugly

The confrontation appeared heated. Voices in the background could be heard shouting, "You can't leave here until you go back to finish the remaining shooting." The situation escalated when the actor exchanged harsh words with the film's director.

In the video, Branch confronted the director, saying angrily, "Did I have business with you? Are you the one that called me on this set? Did you bring me here to insult me, or what is the meaning of this?"

Attempting to calm the situation, the director responded, "Hello, sir, can we just start the filming?"

But Branch snapped, "Please don't talk to me. You don't have control of your set."

The director, however, held his ground, reminding the actor of his conduct. "You are insulting someone on my set. Did I not even tell you it was enough during the altercation? I don't necessarily have to talk to you. Let's just shoot this film and go. You slapped somebody on my set. Was I not the one you slapped? Oga, no problem. You have done your own."

Tensions flare as Branch reacts to security

As tensions grew, Branch directed his anger at the security team guarding the location's gate. He accused them of unlawful confinement and vowed to



report them to the estate authorities.

"You people are blocking me from driving out, right?" he asked. "I swear to God, I will report you to the management for locking me inside your estate. You must explain your business with our location."

Despite his threats, the security guards refused to let him go, siding with the crew who demanded accountability.

Background on the incident

Details leading up to the confrontation remain unclear, but insiders claim the dispute began over a disagreement during the shoot. The assistant director, who was reportedly slapped by Branch, was said to have corrected the actor on a particular scene. The correction allegedly sparked Branch's anger, leading to the altercation.

Although there is no official statement yet from the film's producers or the actor himself, industry sources suggest disciplinary action could follow, especially as the footage continues to stir reactions online.

Reactions from the public

The incident has generated a wave of mixed responses on social media. Some fans have criticised Branch for allegedly assaulting a crew member, calling his

behaviour unprofessional and unacceptable. Others urged caution, asking for the full story before jumping to conclusions.

One Twitter user wrote, "Regardless of who's right or wrong, slapping a crew member is crossing the line. Femi Branch should know better."

Another commented, "We don't know what led to the argument. Let's hear from both sides."

Possible consequences

Nollywood insiders warn that the outcome of this incident could affect Branch's reputation in the industry. Some producers may now hesitate to work with him until the matter is fully resolved.

The Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN) is yet to release an official comment, but if the allegations are confirmed, disciplinary measures may be considered.

Final words

As the video continues to make the rounds, many in the industry are watching to see how the situation unfolds. Whether the issue is resolved quietly or leads to formal action, the incident serves as a reminder of the high tensions that can sometimes arise behind the scenes of Nollywood's booming film industry.



# What we know about Trump bombing of Iran's nuclear sites

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi

The United States has launched targeted airstrikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure in what President Donald Trump hailed as a "very successful attack," marking a dramatic escalation in a conflict that has already claimed hundreds of lives across the region.

The strikes, carried out late Saturday, targeted three of Iran's key nuclear sites — Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan — with Trump confirming that Fordow was hit with a "full payload of bombs." The Iranian government has condemned the assault as a grave violation of international law and warned of "everlasting consequences."

## Precision Strikes on Hardened Targets

According to U.S. officials, the strikes were conducted using bunker-buster bombs, likely the GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator, dropped by B-2 Spirit stealth bombers. These aircraft, capable of flying undetected for thousands of miles, are uniquely equipped to breach deeply fortified underground facilities like Fordow, which is built under a mountain near the holy city of Qom.

The Natanz site, Iran's main uranium enrichment center, and the Isfahan uranium conversion facility were also struck, reportedly by Tomahawk cruise missiles. Trump, flanked by Vice President JD Vance, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio during the announcement, described the operation as a necessary measure to "eliminate threats to global peace."

## Iran Responds: "All Options on the Table"

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi condemned the strikes as a direct attack on Iranian sovereignty. "Iran reserves all options to defend its sovereignty, interests, and people," he said in a statement, warning that retaliation could be imminent.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) responded overnight by launching at least 40 missiles at Israeli targets, including Tel Aviv and military sites across the country. Israel's Health Ministry reported 86 injuries, while at least three missiles reportedly penetrated air defenses and hit residential areas.

In Iran, state media reports that 430 people have been killed and 3,500 injured since Israeli airstrikes began on June 13. Israeli casualties stand at 24 dead and 1,272 injured, according to local authorities.



## A Region on the Brink

The conflict has thrust the Middle East into its most dangerous moment in years. The U.S. strikes follow more than a week of open warfare between Iran and Israel, sparked by what Israeli officials said was intelligence indicating Iran was close to producing nuclear weapons.

Western efforts to mediate — including outreach from Britain and Germany — have so far failed. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres warned the U.S. strikes represent a "dangerous escalation" and called an emergency Security Council meeting.

## Read Also:

Israel-Iran conflict: Trump weighs, holds off decision for two weeks

Fears of WW3 grow as U.S deploys military Arsenal over Iran-Israel conflict

Tehran: Pakistan will attack Israel if nuclear weapon is used

Despite widespread fears of a regional conflagration, Trump insisted the door to diplomacy remains open. "Now is the time for peace," he said, though he warned that "if peace does not come quickly, we will go after those other targets." Washington had privately assured Tehran that regime change was not the goal, but Iran's leaders remain unconvinced.

## Global Fallout and Civilian Fear

The international community is bracing for ripple effects. Airspace over the region remains restricted, with airlines rerouting or suspending flights across vast portions of

the Middle East.

Civilians across Iran and Israel are living in fear. "Our future is dark. We have nowhere to go — it's like living in a horror movie," said Bitá, a teacher in central Iran, before her phone line went dead.

Meanwhile, Gulf Arab states — many of which have recently sought rapprochement with Iran — have expressed deep concern over the escalation, fearing their energy infrastructure may become collateral damage.

## Nuclear Fallout — Literal and Political

While the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported no off-site radiation leaks, its director, Rafael Grossi, has called for an emergency meeting of the agency's 35-member board.

A senior Iranian official claimed much of the enriched uranium had been moved out of Fordow before the attack, and nuclear personnel had been evacuated. However, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation vowed to continue developing its national nuclear industry.

Tehran has also raised the possibility of withdrawing from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), a move that could permanently alter the region's nuclear landscape.

As tensions reach a boiling point, world leaders are urging calm. Whether these events lead to renewed diplomacy or a wider war remains uncertain — but for millions in the region, the threat is already deeply personal and dangerously close.

# Pope Leo XIV vows zero tolerance for abuse in Catholic Church

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**P**ope Leo XIV has declared there must be no tolerance within the Catholic Church for any form of abuse, whether sexual, spiritual, or an abuse of authority, as he calls for transparent processes and a robust culture of prevention across the global Church.

In his first public statement on the long-running clergy sex abuse crisis, the newly elected pontiff addressed a message to Peruvian journalist Paola Ugaz, whose investigative work helped expose one of Latin America's most notorious Catholic scandals.

The message, read aloud on Friday evening during a stage performance in Lima based on Ugaz's reporting, centred on the case of the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae (SCV), a controversial Catholic movement founded in Peru in 1971. The group has faced years of allegations involving spiritual manipulation, sexual abuse, and financial corruption.

"It is urgent to root in the whole Church a culture of prevention that does not tolerate any form of abuse, neither of power or authority, nor abuse of

conscience, spiritual or sexual abuse," Leo said. "This culture will only be authentic if it is born of active vigilance, of transparent processes and sincere listening to those who have been hurt. For this, we need journalists."

Leo XIV is no stranger to the Sodalitium case. Before his papacy, then-Bishop Robert Prevost served in Peru for two decades as a missionary priest and bishop. He was deeply involved in supporting survivors and was the Peruvian bishops' lead figure for abuse victims, helping several reach financial settlements with the group.

Following his transfer to the Vatican by Pope Francis in 2023, Prevost played a key role in dismantling the Sodalitium. This included the resignation of a senior bishop within the organisation and, ultimately, the suppression of the group earlier this year, shortly before Pope Francis's death.

Pope Leo XIV faces the complex task of overseeing complete dissolution of Sodalitium

Now, as Pope, Leo faces the complex task of overseeing the complete dissolution of the Sodalitium and the

redistribution of its considerable assets. His message was delivered on his behalf by Vatican envoy Monsignor Jordi Bertomeu, who stood alongside Ugaz on stage in a powerful symbolic moment.

Leo also used the occasion to issue a stirring defence of press freedom, praising journalists who, he said, demonstrate courage by holding power to account. "A free press is a common good that cannot be renounced," he wrote, urging public authorities to protect journalists from retaliation.

Ugaz and fellow investigative reporter Pedro Salinas, both of whom have faced years of legal harassment from Sodalitium members and allies, have publicly praised Leo for his bold stance on the scandal and his unwavering support for survivors and truth-tellers.

The abuse dossier remains one of the most daunting challenges of Leo's early papacy, especially as survivors press him to go further than his predecessor in implementing a zero-tolerance policy, including in cases where victims were adults, and the abuse less easily categorised but no less devastating.



# Starmer tightens discipline as labour faces rebellion over benefit cuts

By Fatimah Idera



**S**ir Keir Starmer is tightening his grip on Labour MPs as the party braces for a major rebellion over upcoming benefit reforms, with backbenchers now being ordered to attend a critical vote on July 1.

Dozens of Labour MPs who had planned to be absent from Parliament that day say their official permission to miss the vote has been withdrawn, a move seen as a clear signal from party leadership that no dissent will be tolerated. The vote concerns the Government's proposed £4.3 billion cut to welfare spending, including major reforms to Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

The legislation would tighten eligibility for PIP, limiting it to only the most severely disabled adults, a move campaigners warn could push around 250,000 people into poverty. Despite concerns from within the

party, the Labour leadership appears determined to enforce support for the Bill.

One backbench MP said that their planned visit to a local primary school had been cancelled due to the directive. "They've cancelled everyone's slips that day," the MP said. "At first, I thought I might abstain or vote against it at a later stage. But when they pulled my slip, it decided for me."

Another Labour MP who had organised an overseas trip for the start of July said the entire visit, including booked flights and visas, had to be called off. "It's poor management from Downing Street," they said. "It's just building frustration. People aren't debating whether to support the Bill, they're choosing between abstaining or voting against it."

Critics within the party say the

leadership's approach is fuelling resentment and risks increasing the scale of the rebellion. "It's another hill we're being marched up," one said. "There's a repeated theme of a bunker mentality in No 10, like they think they always know best."

Over 100 Labour MPs are believed to harbour serious concerns about the Bill. With the Government enjoying a working majority of 165, at least 83 Labour MPs would need to oppose it to block the legislation, an unlikely but not impossible prospect if the revolt gains momentum.

Some MPs say the Bill still fails to fix the "fundamental problems" they raised in response to the earlier green paper. "There are good intentions, but the cliff-edge this creates for claimants is too steep," said one. "I'm not trying to cause trouble. But unless the Government makes changes, I can't support it."

# Under siege: Israel locks down as Iran vows revenge

By Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi



Israel has entered a heightened state of national alert following overnight U.S. airstrikes on Iranian nuclear facilities, with the government rolling out emergency measures and sealing its airspace in anticipation of possible retaliation.

In a formal statement, Israel's Ministry of Defence announced that civil defence policies had been immediately updated after a high-level security assessment. "Effective today, the country is operating under essential-activity-only protocols," the statement read.

The new measures include:

- Suspension of all educational activities nationwide
- Ban on public gatherings
- Restrictions on non-essential workplaces, excluding vital services such as healthcare, security, water, and electricity

**Airspace Sealed Amid Retaliation Fears**  
In a major move reflecting the

escalating security concerns, the Israeli Airports Authority confirmed the closure of national airspace to all incoming and outgoing flights "until further notice."

The decision follows the U.S. bombardment of three Iranian nuclear sites — Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan — with bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles. The strikes, ordered by President Donald Trump, have ignited fears of a broader regional conflict.

Iran responded with a barrage of missiles fired at Israeli cities, with at least three impacts confirmed in residential areas. According to the Health Ministry, 23 people were injured in the attacks, though most sustained only minor wounds.

**Borders Remain Open, But Anxiety Runs High**

Despite the airspace shutdown, land border crossings with Egypt and Jordan remain operational, the Airports Authority said. The closure comes just two days after Israel briefly reopened its skies to allow stranded nationals to return home.

Authorities are urging citizens to remain alert and adhere strictly to civil defence instructions. Emergency services are on high readiness, and local councils have activated bomb shelter protocols in several regions, particularly in central and northern Israel.

**Background: A Region on Edge**

The U.S. strikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure have brought long-simmering tensions to the boiling point. Israel has been engaged in open conflict with Iran since June 13, citing Tehran's accelerated uranium enrichment programme as an existential threat.

Iran has denied seeking nuclear weapons and called the attacks a violation of international law. In the hours since the U.S. operation, Iran has vowed to retaliate against both Washington and Tel Aviv.

As of this morning, much of the Middle East remains on high alert, with air traffic rerouted, and diplomatic channels struggling to contain the crisis.



# JD Vance slammed for petty jibe at Senator Padilla

By **Elizabeth Jenrola Oso**



Vice-President JD Vance has drawn widespread criticism after referring to California Senator Alex Padilla by the name of a convicted terrorist, prompting accusations of pettiness and racial provocation from Democrats and observers nationwide.

The controversy stems from a press event on Friday during Vance's visit to Los Angeles, where he was questioned about the Trump administration's aggressive response to recent anti-ICE protests. In a remark widely condemned as deliberate and inflammatory, Vance referred to the senator as "Jose Padilla" invoking the name of a U.S. citizen convicted in 2007 of plotting to detonate a radioactive bomb for al-Qaida.

"I was hoping Jose Padilla would be here to ask a question," Vance said, smirking, before adding: "I guess he decided not to show up because there wasn't a theater. And that's all it is."

Padilla, a sitting senator since 2021 and a former colleague of Vance's in the Senate, responded to the jab during an appearance on MSNBC's *The Weekend*, stating, "He knows my name, he knows my name." He called the remark evidence of how "petty and unserious this administration is."

"You'd think he'd take the situation in Los Angeles more seriously. We've got a lot of important work to do. But this is how the vice-president chooses to act, and that says a lot," Padilla said.

Padilla had made headlines earlier this month when he was forcibly removed and handcuffed during a 12 June press conference led by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, following protests against the Trump administration's immigration enforcement tactics. The senator said he was attempting to ask questions about federal policy when he was detained. He has not been arrested or charged.

Padilla denounced the White House's recent immigration measures, claiming that while he supports targeting "drug dealers, violent criminals, dangerous criminals," the reality is that many of those detained by ICE have "no serious criminal convictions."

California Governor Gavin Newsom also waded into the row, blasting Vance on social media: "JD Vance served with Alex Padilla in the United States Senate. Calling him 'Jose Padilla' is not an accident." In a follow-up post, Newsom challenged Vance to a debate: "Since you're so eager to talk about me, how about saying it to my face? Let's debate. Time and place?"

Newsom's team later shared a cartoonish image of Vance at a podium, mocking the vice-president and tagging President Trump: "Donald, you should send @JDVance out to California more often. He's absolutely crushing it!"

The vice-president's office attempted to downplay the insult, claiming that Vance had merely "mixed up two people who broke the law" a statement that quickly drew more criticism, as Padilla has no criminal charges and was detained in what many call a clear case of government overreach.

Reflecting on his forced removal, Padilla said, "As painful as [the removal] was for me, for my family, it's not about me. If this is what this administration is willing to do to a senator trying to ask a question, imagine what is happening in all corners of the country ... when the cameras are not on."

Padilla, the first Latino senator from California, has long been a vocal critic of Trump-era immigration policies. His latest clash with the administration signals growing tensions between state and federal leadership in Democratic strongholds like California and serves as a stark reminder of the deep divisions in American political discourse.

# Reborn dolls spark political and social uproar across Brazil

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

While Brazil contends with the trial of a former president over an attempted coup and the current leader's worst popularity ratings in years, another, seemingly unrelated subject has gripped public attention: reborn dolls.

These hyper-realistic baby dolls, often handmade and costing up to £2,500, have dominated headlines, social media, soap operas, and even legislative agendas in recent weeks. Around 30 bills concerning reborn dolls have been introduced across various levels of government. Some proposals seek to ban the dolls from receiving public healthcare services or prevent collectors from claiming priority in public queues.

The phenomenon has provoked widespread mockery online. Videos of collectors bathing the dolls, pushing them in prams, or tucking them into bed have gone viral, often accompanied by ridicule. A satirical rap song even encouraged people to "kick the dolls in the street."

The backlash reached a disturbing climax on 6 June, when a man struck a four-month-old infant on the head, claiming he thought the child was a doll. He is currently out on bail. The baby is reportedly in good condition.

"This is unprecedented," said Isabela Kalil, a political scientist and anthropologist at FESPSP University. "I can't recall any other issue that, in such a short period, managed to spark so many bills across different levels of government."

Yet many of the proposed laws seem to address imaginary problems. Only one confirmed case exists of a collector attempting to bring a doll to a public hospital, reportedly involving a woman with a psychiatric illness.

According to a report by UOL, all May proposals concerning reborn dolls were tabled by right-wing or far-right politicians. Kalil suggests this reflects a strategic political move, particularly as the country's far-right bloc faces instability. Former president Jair Bolsonaro, now on trial for an attempted coup, has already been barred from the



2026 election by Brazil's electoral court.

"There is a clear attempt to grab attention and push an agenda at a time when the right is scrambling for a new figurehead," said Kalil, who leads a research group studying the Brazilian far right.

However, the backlash isn't strictly political. Critics from across the political spectrum have piled on. Social media users, influencers, and even comedians have found in the dolls a new target for online scorn. But it's the women at the heart of this niche hobby, artists, collectors, and content creators, who have borne the brunt of the storm.

"I receive daily threats through social media," said 25-year-old artist and collector Larissa Vedolin, known online as Emily Reborn. "I get messages from anonymous accounts saying things like, 'I can't wait to get a gun and find you on the street.'"

Reborn community exists in Brazil since early 2000s

The reborn community, which has existed in Brazil since at least the early 2000s, has been left baffled by the sudden wave of hostility. Some trace the backlash to a TikTok video in which a collector was criticised for taking her doll to a shopping centre. Another video showing a doll being "treated" in a hospital, later revealed to be role-play, only fuelled the fire.

Bianca Miranda, a 27-year-old artist and collector, said that in her 14 years in the reborn world, she's never known anyone who treated the dolls as actual children. "They're art. That's what people don't understand," she said.

Creating a reborn doll can take weeks. Techniques vary depending on whether the hair is painted or delicately implanted strand by strand. Prices reflect the craftsmanship, ranging from £200 to £2,500.

YouTuber Chico Barney, who filmed a reborn collectors' event in São Paulo for his documentary *Reborn Babies Don't Cry*, said he was surprised by how "un-eccentric" the community is. "It was just a bunch of people exchanging ideas about something they enjoy," he said.

Kalil argues that the controversy also exposes a deeper societal bias: "Adult men can collect action figures or play video games without raising eyebrows. But adult women are not allowed the same luxury of entertainment. It's a pathologisation of women's hobbies."

Vedolin echoed this sentiment. "These aren't toys; they're works of art," she said. Yet even art, she notes, has become a bitter battlefield. "I know artists who've cried all day because they can't bear to open social media and see the insults. And to me, this reaction boils down to hate; people just want something to hate."



# Britain braces for escalating threat of Iranian attack

By Fatimah Idera

A senior UK Cabinet minister has warned that the threat of Iranian retaliation on British soil could intensify following overnight US airstrikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

President Donald Trump authorised B-2 bomber strikes on three key Iranian nuclear sites, calling the operation a very successful attack. In response, Iran's foreign minister warned the bombings would have everlasting consequences, prompting international fears of reprisal attacks.

Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said Iran's covert activity in the UK was already at a significant level, citing persistent cyber attacks and espionage operations. "Hardly a week goes by without an Iranian cyber attack on the UK's infrastructure," he said. "It would be naive to think that this threat wouldn't escalate. But Iran has a choice to remain a destabilising force, or take a better path for its people and the world."

Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch also issued a stark warning, calling Iran a direct threat to the UK. Writing on X (formerly Twitter), she said: "Our security services have stopped multiple Iranian terrorist plots and assassination attempts on UK soil. Iran's ballistic missiles can reach Europe, and the Revolutionary Guards remain one of the biggest threats to global stability."

She added that Iran's regime promotes anti-British sentiment nearly as strongly as its hostility toward Israel and the US, sometimes referring to the UK as the Little Satan.

Iran-linked groups repeatedly targeted dissidents and foreign nationals in Britain. In recent years, Iran-linked groups have repeatedly targeted dissidents and foreign nationals in Britain. In May, a terror plot allegedly orchestrated by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to attack the Israeli Embassy in London was thwarted by MI5 and counter-terrorism police. Four Iranian nationals were



arrested in coordinated raids across the UK. Though they were later released without charge, the investigation is ongoing.

Home Secretary Yvette Cooper described the alleged embassy plot as one of the most significant counter-terrorism operations in recent years.

That same month, three Iranian men, Mostafa Sepahvand, Farhad Javadi Manesh, and Shapoor Qalehali Khani Noori, were charged with attempting to assist Iran's intelligence services by targeting UK-based journalists from Iran International, an independent media outlet critical of the Tehran regime. They are accused of enabling serious acts of violence against the journalists.

Following the charges, Cooper warned, "Iran must be held to account for its actions."

In March last year, Iran International journalist Pouria Zeraati was attacked outside his home in London. Two Romanian nationals were later charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm. The incident is believed to be linked to Iranian efforts to suppress dissent abroad using hired criminal proxies, individuals without apparent ties to Iran, making such plots harder to detect.

Zeraati has since relocated abroad, citing safety concerns. In a public statement, he criticised the UK government's response to the Iranian threat, arguing it had failed to adequately protect him and others.

UK intelligence services have reportedly foiled at least 15 plots to kidnap or kill employees of Iran International, which the Iranian regime has labelled a terrorist organisation. Tehran has openly stated its intent to pursue the channel's staff, prompting heightened security measures.

Anti-regime protesters also remain at risk. On Friday, demonstrators outside the Iranian embassy in London were violently attacked, resulting in two hospitalisations. The Metropolitan Police have charged seven men with grievous bodily harm.

Footage posted online shows the protesters chanting against the Iranian regime shortly before the violence erupted.

As tensions escalate in the Middle East, UK authorities remain on high alert. Security services continue to monitor Iranian-linked threats closely amid growing concern that Britain may become a target in a wider campaign of retaliation.

# Jonathan Reynolds blames defeatist attitude for UK's over-reliance on foreign workers

By Fatimah Idera



**B**usiness Secretary Jonathan Reynolds has warned Britain not to become too dependent on foreign labour due to a defeatist approach to getting young people into skilled jobs.

He criticised what he called the casual attitude taken by previous governments in allowing sectors like healthcare, construction, and manufacturing to rely heavily on imported workers, leaving the UK workforce with tremendous skills gaps and vulnerable to global economic shocks.

His intervention comes ahead of Labour's release on Monday of a long-term industrial strategy designed to reduce Britain's dependence on foreign workers by investing in its talent pool. The plan includes a 10-year blueprint to train thousands of school leavers for high-skilled roles, particularly in defence, engineering, and manufacturing.

"We've got to stop assuming we can't train people or that we don't have the capacity," said Reynolds. "That mindset is too defeatist. We can not have a strong, modern economy unless we're building the skills base to support it."

The push for a new industrial strategy follows stark findings from Oxford University's Migration Observatory, which show that foreign workers now make up nearly 20% of the UK workforce, up from 12% a decade ago. At the same time, nearly one in seven young Britons aged 16 to 24 are not in employment, education, or training (Neet), a figure Reynolds called appalling.

"The country has failed this generation," he said. "There's not just an economic case to act. There's a moral one too. It's a tragedy when young people don't see a future in sectors that desperately need them."

Reynolds said Labour's plan will establish a new wave of technical colleges and fund cutting-edge courses, giving school leavers clearer routes into well-paid, future-proof careers. The strategy, he stressed, would mark a shift away from laissez-faire economics toward a more hands-on government role in industrial planning.

Jonathan Reynolds backs proposals for £5 billion in welfare reforms

While acknowledging that international talent remains important, Reynolds argued that high net migration doesn't have public consent and should not be the default solution to workforce shortages.

"We have to be pro-talent, but also honest. Migration alone can not be the only way we meet our skills needs," he said. "We're vulnerable when the entire world is chasing the same expertise in areas like engineering and defence. That's why we need to grow our pipeline."

He backed proposals for £5 billion in welfare reforms, including cuts to benefits, despite facing pushback from within Labour. Reynolds insisted that young people who can work should be in jobs, training, or education.

"No young person should be left behind unless they have a significant disability or are genuinely unable to work," he said. "There are brilliant opportunities in creative industries, energy, services, and advanced manufacturing. I want my kids to be able to take those paths, and we need to make sure others can too."



# British airways halts flights to Dubai amid rising tensions

By **Fatimah Idera**



**B**ritish Airways and Singapore Airlines have suspended flights to and from Dubai following overnight US airstrikes on Iran, as airlines respond to the rapidly escalating security situation in the region.

The UK's flag carrier cancelled two scheduled flights to Dubai and Doha, both set to depart from London Heathrow on Sunday afternoon. A BA spokesperson confirmed that no flights would operate to or from the Gulf states on Sunday, citing safety concerns.

"As a result of recent events, we have adjusted our flight schedule to ensure the safety of our customers and crew, which is always our top priority," the spokesperson said. "We are contacting our customers to advise them of their options while we work through this developing situation."

BA said it will reassess the situation over the next 24 hours and determine whether services can resume on Monday. In the meantime, passengers

booked to travel between Heathrow and Doha or Dubai between Sunday and Tuesday may rebook their flights at no extra charge for travel up to July 6.

Singapore Airlines also announced the cancellation of two flights to and from Dubai on Sunday, following what it described as a security assessment of the geopolitical situation in the Middle East. The airline warned that further disruptions may occur and confirmed it would contact affected customers, who will be eligible for refunds.

"As the situation remains fluid, other SIA flights between Singapore and Dubai may be affected," a statement read.

The flight suspensions come amid growing disruption to air travel across the Middle East. Airlines have already been rerouting flights to avoid areas affected by the conflict between Israel and Iran, which erupted on June 13. Data from Flightradar24 shows vast stretches of airspace over the region remain largely empty.

Restrictions on Western carriers using Russian airspace have further limited options, forcing long-haul flights to reroute over Turkey, the Caspian Sea, and Central Asia.

Earlier on Sunday, a British Airways flight en route from Chennai, India, to London turned back mid-flight following news of the US assault on Iran. The aircraft later refuelled and completed the journey safely.

Major US airlines, including Delta and United, also suspended flights to Israel last week and have since halted services to Dubai and Doha as tensions mount.

Dubai, one of the world's most popular international travel hubs, is home to the world's busiest airport by international passenger traffic. Dubai International Airport handles over 90 million passengers annually and serves as a major transit point for travellers heading between Europe, Asia, and beyond.

# U.S on high alert for possible Iranian-backed terror attacks following airstrikes

By **Fatimah Idera**

The United States is on heightened alert amid fears of retaliatory terror attacks by Iranian-backed operatives, following President Donald Trump's dramatic airstrikes on Iran's nuclear infrastructure late Saturday.

Speaking Sunday on NBC's Meet the Press, Vice President JD Vance warned that security agencies are closely monitoring potential threats, particularly from individuals connected to terrorist watch lists who may have entered the U.S. in recent years.

"We feel very confident in our FBI and law enforcement that we're on top of the situation," Vance said. "But yeah, we're looking at this very closely... We're doing everything we can to keep our people safe."

Homeland Security Measures Intensify Police departments in Washington, D.C., New York City, and other major urban areas have increased their presence around places of worship and sensitive public locations. The Department of Homeland Security is said to be working with local law enforcement to ensure rapid response capabilities in the event of a coordinated attack.

According to senior officials speaking to NBC News, the next 48 hours are considered a critical window, with U.S. intelligence agencies concerned that sleeper cells tied to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) may have received activation orders.

**White House Monitors Domestic Threats**

The White House is reportedly reviewing intelligence on potential Iranian assets already present on U.S. soil, including individuals who may have entered the country during the Biden administration. Vice President Vance directly criticized former immigration policies, suggesting they



allowed high-risk individuals to slip through.

The FBI, CIA, and National Counterterrorism Center have all issued internal alerts, urging vigilance as geopolitical tensions surge to their highest point in years.

**Background: Strikes and Shifting Strategies**

Saturday's airstrikes on Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan — Iran's three main nuclear facilities — marked a significant escalation in U.S. military engagement in the Middle East. Though President Trump has long opposed new wars, officials close to him say the timing of the strike came after Israeli intelligence revealed vulnerabilities in Iran's air defense networks, especially those previously believed to be shielded by Russian systems.

"This may be Trump's biggest foreign policy gamble yet," said Fred Fleitz, a former national security adviser during Trump's first term. "But he acted only when the odds had started to turn his way."

Fleitz noted that last year's Iranian missile attacks on Israel had



inadvertently exposed Tehran's defensive infrastructure. "It gave Israel a chance to probe and map their weaknesses," he said.

**Military Assets at Risk Abroad**

More than 40,000 U.S. troops are currently stationed across the Middle East, including in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, and aboard naval vessels in the Persian Gulf. Officials have not ruled out the possibility that Iran may target American soldiers or diplomatic compounds in the region as part of a broader retaliation strategy.

Despite the risks, Trump defended the strikes as necessary to halt what he described as "an advancing nuclear threat." Tehran, meanwhile, has condemned the attacks as a violation of international law and vowed "unrestricted retaliation."

With the region on edge and American cities bracing for the worst, the coming days could prove pivotal — not just for U.S.-Iran relations, but for global security.

New Daily Prime will continue to report on this developing story.



# Starmer urged to ban IRGC following crackdown on Palestine action

By **Fatimah Idera**



**S**ir Keir Starmer is facing growing pressure from within his own party to ban Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group, following the Government's decision to designate Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation.

The move comes after activists from the group broke into RAF Brize Norton on Friday and vandalised two military aircraft. In response, the Home Office announced that Palestine Action will be banned under terrorism laws, a decision that has sparked backlash from the group, which plans to stage a mass protest outside Parliament at noon on Monday.

Labour backbenchers are now urging the Prime Minister to take a similarly tough stance on the IRGC, especially as hostilities between Iran and Israel escalate. The IRGC, originally formed to safeguard the ideals of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, has evolved into a powerful military and political entity, with strong ties to militant groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah, both of which are already banned in the UK.

Luke Akehurst, Labour MP for North Durham, welcomed the ban on Palestine Action but said attention must now shift to the IRGC. "It's now urgent, given the conflict in Iran, that the Government moves to proscribe the IRGC, which is a terrorist organisation that represents a significant threat, including here in the UK," he said.

Charlotte Nichols, MP for Warrington North, added: "As much as I have no time for Palestine Action, it's quite clear who the bigger threat to our national security is. They should have done it a long time ago, but the second-best time is now."

While Labour called for the IRGC's proscription while in opposition, the party has not acted on those calls since coming into government nearly a year ago.

Reform UK leader Nigel Farage also joined calls to ban the IRGC, warning of the group's influence in Britain. "The Iranian regime has clearly been funding propaganda hubs and promoting terror throughout the UK. It's high time action was taken to safeguard our institutions and communities," he told the media.

Palestine Action, founded in 2020, is known for its campaign of direct action and property damage targeting organisations it claims are linked to Zionism. Since the October 7 Hamas attacks in Israel, the group has ramped up its activities, including the recent break-in at RAF Brize Norton where activists sprayed red paint into the engines of two Airbus Voyager aircraft. The incident is now under investigation by counter-terror police.

Proscription of the group allows the Government to freeze its assets and seize funds — a measure supporters say could also be used effectively against the IRGC to disrupt terror networks and Islamist propaganda in the UK.

Meanwhile, tensions in the Middle East continue to rise. On Saturday, the Israeli military confirmed it had killed a second commander of the IRGC's overseas arm in a precision strike near Tehran.

The Home Office has not yet responded to calls for the IRGC to be formally banned.

# Hegseth claims US strikes obliterated Iran's nuclear sites

By **Fatimah Idera**

The US Defence Secretary, Pete Hegseth, has echoed claims by Donald Trump that a covert American military operation has “obliterated” Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, even as the Pentagon admitted it was too early to assess the full extent of the damage.

Speaking at his first Pentagon press briefing since taking office, Hegseth praised Operation Midnight Hammer, a large-scale strike that reportedly targeted Iran’s most fortified nuclear sites, Natanz, Fordow, and Esfahan, in a coordinated bombing campaign.

“It was an incredible and overwhelming success,” Hegseth declared, dressed in a navy suit with a US flag pocket square. “Thanks to President Trump’s bold and visionary leadership and his commitment to peace through strength, Iran’s nuclear ambitions have been obliterated.”

General Dan Caine, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stood alongside Hegseth and confirmed the operation was conducted primarily by B-2 stealth bombers and advanced fighter jets, launched from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. A decoy formation simultaneously flew over the Pacific to mislead Iranian defences.

The main force of seven B-2 bombers flew non-stop for 18 hours, refuelling mid-air multiple times. According to Caine, the aircraft released 14 GBU-57 “bunker buster” bombs, some of the most powerful non-nuclear weapons in the American arsenal, on the heavily fortified Fordow facility around 2.10 a.m. local time on Saturday morning. Natanz was struck shortly after, while Tomahawk missiles launched from a navy submarine targeted Esfahan.

“We are unaware of any shots fired at the package on the way out,” Caine said. “Iran’s fighters did not fly, and it



appears their surface-to-air missile systems never detected us. We retained the element of surprise.”

Despite the confident rhetoric, both Hegseth and Caine stopped short of offering conclusive evidence of destruction. The Fordow site, built deep into a mountain and long considered Iran’s most resilient nuclear installation, remained a particular focus. The Pentagon’s current position is that the facility has been “obliterated”, though independent verification is pending.

In a televised address from the White House on Saturday evening, President Trump warned Tehran that the US was prepared to launch further attacks unless Iran agreed to enter peace negotiations.

Hegseth confirmed that the administration was engaging with Iranian leadership through “public and private channels”, and that American expectations had been clearly communicated. “They understand precisely what the American position is,” he said. “We hope they do what is

necessary for peace.”

He further emphasised the psychological effect of the mission. “I think Tehran is certainly calculating the reality that planes flew from the middle of America and Missouri overnight, completely undetected over three of their most highly sensitive sites,” Hegseth remarked. “We believe that will have a clear psychological impact on how they view the future.”

Hegseth also admitted that congressional leaders were only notified after the aircraft had exited Iranian airspace, a move likely to ignite criticism among Democrats. The legality of Trump’s decision to initiate the strike without prior congressional authorisation is expected to become a flashpoint in the coming days.

As tensions flare once again between Washington and Tehran, questions remain about the long-term implications of the operation, not just for Iran’s nuclear ambitions, but for the broader stability of the Middle East.



# Sex offender allowed to remain in UK due to mental health concerns in Bangladesh

By **Olaoluwa Vincent Ajayi**

**A** Bangladeshi man convicted of serious crimes including sexual assault and drug trafficking has been allowed to remain in the United Kingdom after an immigration tribunal ruled that deporting him would breach his human rights, due to a lack of adequate mental health care in his home country.

The man, whose name is being withheld for legal reasons, was convicted of violently assaulting a stranger in a sexual attack at the age of 17. He was later also found guilty of conspiring to supply “significant” quantities of heroin as part of a county lines drug gang operating across regional borders in the UK.

In addition to these convictions, the Metropolitan Police presented evidence to the tribunal suggesting that the man had committed further sexual offences in the years since his initial assault, although these additional allegations did not result in prosecution. Despite this history, the immigration tribunal ruled in his favour, concluding that he had shown signs of rehabilitation and could be safely managed within the community under close monitoring.

The Home Office had strongly opposed his continued stay in the UK, describing the individual as a dangerous sexual predator who posed a “high risk of harm to the public” and who was likely to reoffend if allowed to remain in the country. However, the tribunal accepted expert psychiatric testimony stating that he suffered from serious mental health conditions and was receiving ongoing treatment that was not readily available in Bangladesh.

According to medical evidence presented during the hearing,



deporting the man would likely lead to a deterioration of his mental health, as psychiatric services in Bangladesh are either inadequate or inaccessible to someone with his specific needs. This led the tribunal to rule that his removal would be in breach of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which prohibits torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.

While Article 8 of the ECHR—protecting the right to a private and family life—was also considered, the decision was primarily based on the medical and humanitarian grounds outlined in Article 3. The tribunal’s ruling has sparked a fresh debate about the UK’s immigration and human rights laws, with critics arguing that the current legal framework allows serious offenders to exploit legal loopholes to avoid deportation.

In response to cases like this, government ministers have proposed raising the legal threshold required to successfully claim the right to remain

in the UK under Articles 3 and 8. The suggested reforms aim to make it significantly harder for foreign nationals with criminal records to resist deportation on human rights grounds unless there is overwhelming and exceptional evidence.

Supporters of the tribunal’s decision argue that the UK has a legal and moral obligation to uphold human rights standards, even in cases involving individuals with serious criminal pasts. They insist that denying someone access to life-saving mental health care simply because of their nationality or criminal record would undermine the very principles the UK’s legal system is built upon.

As the debate continues, the case remains a striking example of the complex tensions between public safety, individual rights, and the limits of the UK’s immigration enforcement.

# Six dead, two missing after boat capsizes on Lake Tahoe

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso



**S**ix people have died and two others remain missing after a boat capsized on Lake Tahoe on Saturday afternoon, local authorities have confirmed.

The incident occurred near DL Bliss State Park when a 27 foot vessel was reportedly struck by a large swell, causing it to overturn. The U.S. Coast Guard and emergency services responded swiftly to distress calls, but were met with tragic scenes on arrival.

According to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Office (EDSO), six fatalities have been confirmed. Two survivors were

rescued from the water and transported to a nearby hospital for treatment, while a further two individuals are still unaccounted for.

In a statement issued on Saturday evening, the sheriff's office said: "EDSO search and rescue, along with the EDSO dive team, will return to the area in the morning to continue search operations." The identities of the deceased are being withheld until next-of-kin notifications are completed.

Lake Tahoe, which straddles the border between California and Nevada, is renowned for its clear blue waters and draws millions

of visitors each year. However, on Saturday, conditions on the lake turned perilous. Local reports, including from South Tahoe News, cited unusually high winds in the afternoon which whipped up waves and created dangerous boating conditions.

"It was a very, very tragic day on Lake Tahoe," said Joby Cefalu, a local boat captain, in an interview with the outlet.

Authorities have urged the public to exercise extreme caution on the water as search efforts continue.



# Rio 2016: Mikel didn't pay Nigeria's flight ticket — Siasia

By New Daily Prime



Nigeria's head coach to the Rio 2016 Olympics in Brazil, Samson Siasia, has dismissed claims by John Obi Mikel that he paid the flight tickets of the U-23 Eagles to Brazil for the games.

In a recent podcast hosted by former England international Peter Crouch, Mikel had claimed that those in charge of football in Nigeria have refused to refund him the money he spent on flight for the team to the Rio Olympics.

The 2013 Africa Cup of Nations winner explained that although the logistics were already included in the 2016 budget, top officials diverted the allocated funds meant for the team.

Even though the development happened in 2016, the 2012 UEFA Champions League winner with Chelsea said he is yet to be refunded.

"There is a story where you paid for everyone's flight," Crouch asked Mikel.

The former Super Eagles captain replied: "Yeah, for the Olympics, again we talk about the corruption. There was no money to pay for the flight, for most of these players, it is their first time going for a major tournament."

But reacting to the claims Siasia in a chat with Nigerian journalist Callistus Ebare said: "Mikel Obi did not pay any flight money for Olympic Eagles from United States to Brazil for the 2016 Olympics. Nothing like that.

"We only had issues with hotel bills. I think, he did pay for some of the hotel bills, but that of the flight from United States to Brazil, Mikel did not pay for that.

"Delta Airline flew us because

Nigerians in the United States were agitated over the issue. A friend of mine went to Delta Airline chairman and they resolved the matter.

"Yemi Idowu had earlier paid for the team's flight tickets, but the aircraft was too small.

"If Mikel has the receipt to that effect, let him show Nigerians that he was the one who paid.

Mikel did not pay for any flight tickets of the team. I say this as the head coach of the team then. He should bring the receipt, if he paid.

"May be he is broke and looking for money. He should try other means to make money,"

Despite facing challenges heading to the 2016 Olympics the U-23 Eagles clinched a bronze medal.