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Mayhem as Israel raids Gaza hospital

3 MORE COUNTRIES JOIN GROWING CHORUS AGAINST RAFAH OFFENSIVE

JERUSALEM

Israeli forces yesterday stormed the biggest functioning hospital in Gaza as footage showed chaos, shouting and gunfire in dark corridors filled with dust and smoke, hours after Israeli fire killed a patient and wounded six others inside the complex.

Israel's military called the raid on Nasser Hospital "precise and limited" and said it was based on information that Hamas militants were hiding and had kept hostages in the facility, with some bodies of captives possibly there.

Health authorities in the Hamas-run Palestinian enclave said Israel had forced out displaced people and families of medical staff sheltering in Nasser Hospital.

Medics flee

The medical charity Medicins San Frontieres said Israel shelled the hospital in the early hours, despite having told medical staff and patients they could remain.

"Our medical staff have had to flee the hospital, leaving patients behind," it said on X.

HEZBOLLAH COMMANDER KILLED

An Israeli strike killed a Hezbollah commander, two fighters and seven civilians in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh, a security source said yesterday, raising fears of further escalation.

In the bloodiest day since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, the Israeli military said it had killed Hezbollah commander Ali Al Debs, his deputy and another fighter in Nabatiyeh.

Fighting at the hospital comes as Israel faces growing international pressure to show restraint, after vowing to press its offensive into Rafah, the last relatively safe place in Gaza.

The leaders of Australia, Canada and New Zealand warned Israel against the potentially "catastrophic" ground offensive in Rafah, amplifying a growing chorus of international concern.

—Agencies
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UK, Japan economies slip into recession

Germany is now world's third-biggest economy

LONDON/TOKYO

Two of the Group of Seven countries — UK and Japan — slipped into recession last year, it was revealed yesterday.

The UK slipped into a mild recession in the second half of 2023, showing Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has so far failed to meet his pledge to grow the economy.

Gross domestic product fell

0.3 per cent in the fourth quarter, more than the 0.1 per cent drop economists forecast, Office for National Statistics figures released yesterday show. That followed an unrevised 0.1 per cent decline in the previous three months, meeting economists' technical definition of a recession, or two consecutive quarters of contraction.

While the economy still grew 0.1 per cent across the year as a whole, it was the slowest annual expansion the UK had seen since 2009, excluding the first year of the pandemic. The UK economy last posted a quarter of growth

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in the first three months of last year.

Meanwhile, Japan unexpectedly slipped into a recession at the end of last year, losing its title as the world's third-biggest economy to Germany (after US and China) and raising

doubts about when the central bank would begin to exit its decade-long ultra-loose monetary policy.

Gross domestic product shrank at an annualised pace of 0.4 per cent in the final three months of last year, following a revised 3.3 per cent contraction in the previous quarter, the Cabinet Office reported yesterday. Economists had expected the economy to expand by 1.1 per cent.

The data also confirmed that Japan's economy slipped to fourth-largest in the world in dollar terms last year.

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