



SIX killed in shooting in the US city of Austin in Texas on Wednesday



Weather table with columns for city, temperature, and weather conditions.

ISRAELI FORCES ENCIRCLE GAZA'S KEY CITY IN SOUTH

GAZA STRIP

ISRAELI forces were encircling southern Gaza's main city on Wednesday, battling Hamas militants through streets and buildings in some of the most intense combat of the two-month war.



Smoke rises following an Israeli bombardment in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel | AFP

The focus of the conflict has shifted into the besieged territory's south following fierce fighting and bombardment that reduced much of the north to rubble and forced nearly two million people to flee their homes.

"We have secured many Hamas strongholds in the northern Gaza Strip, and now we are operating against its strongholds in the south."

The fighting on Tuesday was "the most intense day since the beginning of the ground operation"

in late October, the army's Southern Command chief Major General Yaron Finkelman said. Israel declared war on Hamas after the militant group's October 7 attacks that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, according to Israeli au-

thorities, and saw around 240 hostages taken.

The latest toll from the Hamas-run government media office said 16,248 people in Gaza, most of them women and children, had been killed.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas and free 138 hostages still held after scores were freed during a short-lived truce.

Several Hamas commanders were killed in an air strike near the Indonesia Hospital, the Israeli military said early Wednesday on X. Sources in Hamas and Islamic Jihad, another Palestinian militant group, told AFP their fighters were battling Israeli troops early Wednesday in a bid to prevent them from breaking into Khan Yunis and surrounding areas.

Putin lands in UAE on rare trip

ABU DHABI

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin is in the United Arab Emirates for a rare visit outside the former Soviet Union Wednesday, as Russia seeks to reassert itself on the global stage.

Isolated by the West over the Ukraine war, Putin is courting allies in West Asia, where he will discuss oil, trade and the Israel-Hamas conflict. Putin was greeted on the runway by UAE officials, Russian television showed, before heading to the presidential palace under cavalry escort.

"Today, thanks to your posture, our relations have reached unprecedented levels," Putin told UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on his arrival, praising high trade between the countries. Later today Putin is scheduled to travel to Saudi Arabia to meet with the kingdom's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

AFP

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