



# **SIGNS OF THE TIMES**

**News Articles for Episode 327**

# [Russia's FM Lavrov slams Israel while embracing Iran - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #russia, #iran, #syria, #alliance

Sep 1, 2024

## **Russia is seeking to bring Turkey and the Syrian regime together, while also working closely with Iran.**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov put out several statements over the last few days that include [claims that Israel is provoking Iran](#), and suggesting that  [Hamas and Hezbollah](#) cannot be defeated.

The comments were seen positively in Iran, where state media reported on them. Lavrov said the “assassination of the head of the Hamas politburo [Ismail Haniyeh] was an attempt to provoke Iran and that Iran will never submit to provocative actions,” IRNA reported.

The report is based on comments Lavrov gave to RT, which was subsequently reported in RIA Novosti.

“Iran categorically does not want to succumb to provocations, to get involved in any large-scale military actions. They are trying to provoke it. The [murder of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh](#) in Tehran at the new president's inauguration ceremony is, of course, a provocation. Iran did not react then, but stated that it reserves this right because its territorial integrity and sovereignty were violated – a guest of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran was deliberately eliminated,” Lavrov said.

Iranian state media re-reported this sentence, noting that “it seems that Tel Aviv is the only party that wants to start a big war between Iran and Israel with the intervention of neighboring countries,” RIA Novosti quoted Lavrov as saying.”

## **Russia's selective observations**

Lavrov went on to assert that Israel is trying to “solve” the problem of Hamas, Hezbollah, and also pro-Iran groups in Iraq and Syria. Russia has not condemned the Hamas October 7 attack and has embraced Hamas over the last year. In addition, Russia and Iran have grown closer.

Russia claims that its policy is merely adhering to the UN Charter. The UN Charter doesn't permit non-state actor terrorist groups like Hamas to commit genocide and massacre and kidnap hundreds of people, but Moscow doesn't seem to address this.

Instead, Lavrov was quoted as saying, “If you respect sovereignty, then the Palestinian state, by decision of the UN Security Council, must be created precisely on the basis of its territorial integrity, within the borders that are written in the decision, and have sovereignty. They [Israel and the West] are now trying to foist some kind of ‘ersatz’ on the Palestinians, ‘something’ like closed enclaves controlled by Israel along the outer perimeter of the border. I am sure that this will not lead to anything good,” Lavrov said.

The top Russian diplomat then indicated that the situation in the Middle East has worsened since the killing of Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr in Beirut and the killing of Haniyeh in Tehran in late July. “The Israeli regime does not deny the fact that it intends to take advantage of the conditions and opportunities in the region,” he said, according to the IRNA report.

At the same time that the Russian diplomat was slamming Israel, embracing Iran, and defending Hamas and Hezbollah, he also was expressing hope for a new meeting between Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the Syrian regime. “We are now proceeding from the expediency of preparing the next meeting. I am confident that it will take place in the foreseeable future. We are interested in our partners in Damascus and Ankara normalizing their relations,” he said.

In addition, he claimed Russia was in contact with Israel about the situation in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon.

“According to him, attempts to destroy the Palestinian movement Hamas in Gaza are an absolutely hopeless line. It is necessary to negotiate, since Hamas, as Lavrov noted, is part of the Palestinian people,” the report at RIA noted.

## **Support for Hamas**

The overall context of these reports is that Iran wants more Russian support. Moscow also wants to position itself increasingly in support of not just the Palestinians but also Hamas, in case the group comes to power in the future in place of the Palestinian Authority. Moscow wants closer ties with Turkey and with Iran and it wants to support the Syrian regime.

All this dovetails with backing Hezbollah in Lebanon. Russia sees Iran, Turkey, and Syria as key components of its multi-polar world strategy against the West designed to undermine the US-led world order that once made the US the sole global superpower.

Now things are changing and Moscow wants to play a leading role in the change. As such, Hamas becomes another proxy that can be used to ride this change, much as the Ukraine war is part of this larger policy

The October 7 attack, for instance, can be seen in the context of the Ukraine war, a welcome distraction in Moscow’s view, and one that can be exploited to bring Moscow more influence in the Middle East. If Russia can also bring Turkey and the Syrian

regime together this will be a major accomplishment for Moscow. Slamming Israel helps Moscow get to this goal.

# **Biden Fans the Flames of Tel Aviv, Claims Bibi 'Not Doing Enough' - JewishPress.com**

#bibleprophecy, #america, #biden, #israel

Sep 2, 2024

US President Joe Biden told reporters on Monday that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not doing enough to end the war.

Upon his return to the White House after a two-week vacation in Delaware and California, Biden was asked whether Netanyahu has done enough. His response? "No."

It's not clear, however, what else the president believes Israeli can or should do, other than accept Hamas demands for Israel's complete surrender, which is a non-starter. Israel is engaged in a seven-front existential war, defending its population from attacks not only by Hamas, but also from Iranian proxies in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Judea and Samaria and at one point even from Iran itself.

## **How Should Israel Respond to Hamas Now?**

Biden told the reporters that the US is "very close" to proposing another hostage release deal this week. Will it be successful? "Hope springs eternal," he said.

A senior Biden Administration official who spoke with *The Washington Post* said the US plans to offer Hamas and Israel a final "take it or leave it" deal. If either side fails to accept it, the US may finally walk away, ending the endless round of rejections by Hamas, whose demands have not changed since negotiations began.

His remarks follow a weekend in which the bodies of six Israeli hostages were discovered and recovered by Israeli forces as they searched a tunnel beneath the southern Gaza city of Rafah. All had been tortured — shot multiple times at point-blank range before being executed with a gunshot to the head. Among the dead was Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a dual American-Israeli citizen.

It was the Biden Administration that pressured Israel to delay its entry into the city, possibly sentencing the hostages to death. Biden even threatened Netanyahu and slow-walked military equipment and weapons deliveries in an attempt to dissuade him from allowing Israeli forces to invade Rafah, which they finally did anyway on May 6, 2024 despite international efforts to prevent it.

In Rafah, the IDF discovered more than 150 subterranean terror tunnels, including at least 50 crossing under the southern border into Egypt. Some were large enough to accommodate trucks carrying luxury goods, Iranian cash and weapons, and terrorists.

Others were found to contain multi-level infrastructure complete with electricity, water and communications systems.

Israeli forces carefully searched each and every one, hunting for terrorists and praying to find hostages. Sadly, this past weekend they succeeded but were too late to save them.

It is believed that more hostages are being held captive in Rafah as well as in Khan Younis, the hometown of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. How many of them are still alive, no one really knows. Miraculously, three hostages were rescued alive last month in an extremely dangerous Israeli operation that took place in Khan Younis. At least one of the three hostages was being held captive by a famous Gaza physician who is considered by locals to be one of the city's highest ethical role models.

Hamas has held the hostages captive in Gaza since kidnapping 251 people on October 7, 2023. The Iranian proxy has rejected 29 different deals that have since been placed on the table by Israel, Qatar, Egypt and the US, including the most recent deal that Biden himself announced, with acclaim from the United Nations Security Council, the European Union and fellow deal brokers Qatar and Egypt. Israel accepted that deal too — and Hamas rejected it.

The Iranian-backed terror group violated the one hostage release deal that was signed last November, in which more than 100 hostages were freed in exchange for hundreds of terrorists incarcerated in Israeli prisons and a temporary ceasefire. The ceasefire ended with Hamas renewing its attacks on Israel, but at least some of the hostages were freed.

Since that time, IDF soldiers have risked their lives to search for hostages still being held by the terrorists in “civilian” apartments and tunnels deep beneath the surface of Gaza. Some have been rescued alive; others were brought home, sadly, in body bags.

# [UK suspends 30 of 350 arms export licenses to Israel, insists it's not an embargo | The Times of Israel](#)

#bibleprophecy, #united kingdom, #israel, #export licenses, #arms

Sep 2, 2024

FM Lammy cites risk military equipment might be used to commit violations of international law in Gaza; Israel says move sends 'wrong' message to Hamas, insists military is lawful

Britain said Monday it would immediately suspend dozens of arms export licenses with Israel because there is a risk the equipment might be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law, drawing rebuke from Israeli officials.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said the decision to suspend 30 of 350 arms licenses did not amount to a blanket ban or an arms embargo, but only involved items with concerns over their use during the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

“It is with regret that I inform the House (of Commons, the lower house of parliament) today the assessment I have received leaves me unable to conclude anything other than that for certain UK arms exports to Israel, there does exist a clear risk that they might be used to commit or facilitate a serious violation of international humanitarian law,” Lammy said.

“The UK continues to support Israel’s right to self-defense in accordance with international law,” he added.

Soon after the Labour Party won an election in July, Lammy said he would update a review on arms sales to Israel to ensure these complied with international law.

Unlike the United States, Britain’s government does not give arms directly to Israel, but rather issues licenses for companies to sell weapons, with input from lawyers on whether they comply with international law.

The decision was formally made by Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, with Lammy’s backing.

Responding to the announcement, Foreign Minister Israel Katz said Israel was “disappointed” with recent decisions made by the UK government relating to the war in Gaza.

“Israel is a state of law that operates in accordance with international law and has an independent and respected judicial system,” Katz said in a statement. “We expect ally nations like Britain to recognize that every day, and especially mere days after the execution of six Israeli hostages by Hamas terrorists.”

Katz added that “a step like the one taken now by Britain sends a problematic message to the Hamas terrorist organization and its handlers in Iran,” but that he hoped the relationship between Israel and the UK could remain strong in the future.

Defense Minister Gallant said in a statement that he was “deeply disheartened to learn of the sanctions placed by the UK” and that he stands by the IDF and Israel’s security agencies.

British exports amount to less than one percent of the total arms Israel receives, and Lammy told parliament the suspension would not have a material impact on Israel’s security.

The export licenses pertain to components for Israel’s aerial systems, including fighter jets, helicopters, and drones. It does not pertain to the F-35 program, which is a multinational project that pools parts before disbursing them to participating countries, including Israel.

Lammy’s Labour party instituted a review of the licenses after they returned to power in July, and Lammy has visited Israel twice since assuming office.

British officials have not said that Israel is violating humanitarian law, but believe there is a serious risk, according to the two-month assessment.

The suspension could be lifted in the future if the UK assesses that the risk of violations has diminished.

Britain’s center-left Labour government has repeatedly called for a ceasefire in the Gaza war, and for the speeding up of aid deliveries into Gaza, since taking power on July 5.

It has followed the same approach to the conflict as the previous Conservative government, with Lammy and other ministers at pains to demand Hamas release the hostages seized in its October 7 massacre as part of any ceasefire.

Some commentators have suggested, however, that Labour, led by Keir Starmer — a former human rights lawyer — may take a tougher long-term stance toward Israel and how it conducts its military operations.

Last week, the UK foreign ministry said it was “deeply” concerned by an Israeli military operation in the West Bank, urging it to “exercise restraint” and adhere to international law.



Israel responded to the Hamas October attack with a military offensive aimed at destroying the terror group in Gaza and freeing the hostages. Over the weekend the IDF recovered the bodies of six hostages who were [executed by Hamas](#) as troops closed in on their location.

# [FCC Commissioner to Newsmax: Brazil's X Censorship 'Tip of the Iceberg' | Newsmax.com](#)

#bibleprophecy, #brazil, #censorship, #control, #news

Sep 3, 2024

FCC Commissioner Brendan Carr told [Newsmax](#) on Tuesday that the "concerning" censorship of the social media platform X in Brazil is just "the tip of the iceberg."

On Friday, Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes [ordered the suspension](#) of Elon Musk's X after the tech billionaire declined to name a legal representative in the country.

The move is reportedly the latest in a long-running feud between de Moraes and Musk over free speech, misinformation, and conservative X accounts.

During an appearance on Newsmax's "[Carl Higbie FRONTLINE](#)," Carr said the situation in Brazil is "what is taking place just below the surface in countries all across the globe."

"It's very concerning," Carr said. "Some of the headlines would suggest that this was a dispute about a registered agent in Brazil; it's nothing like that. I've read through the full 51-page decision of the justice in Brazil, and he says expressly that he wants to ban X because he's worried that free speech available to the people in Brazil will influence how they will vote in Brazil's upcoming election.

"He pointed expressly to Brexit in 2016 and [former] President [Donald] Trump's election here in 2016 as examples of populist outcomes, indicating that he wanted to avoid," he continued. "This violates Brazil's constitution. There are government officials in Brazil that are standing up against this. They don't necessarily need to reflect the same free speech rights we have in America, but you can't violate Brazilian law and take that out in retribution on companies that are ultimately tied back to the U.S."

Carr also pointed to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's admission last week that he was [pressured to censor](#) COVID-19 content on his platforms during the pandemic by the Biden-Harris administration and said that it "should be deeply concerning" to all Americans.

"We need some accountability there, but, at least in the short term, Facebook and other social media sites should publicly disclose, between now and the election, if any government officials — right, left, center — pressure them to censor America's posts,"

he said. "If they don't feel like they can publicly disclose it, then they should go to Congress and immediately disclose on a bipartisan basis that pressure that's taking place.

"Free speech is so important, but it's really on the knife edge right now," he continued. "We are seeing, to your point, an effort to adopt censorship, to put it in the rubric of disinformation or misinformation, but it's concerning. Free speech is democracy's check on authoritarianism and, unfortunately, this is a live debate right now.

# [Almost one in four Jewish children face antisemitism at or around school - Jewish News](#)

#bibleprophecy, #anti-semitism, #students, #jews, #united kingdom

Sep 2, 2024

JPR survey also reveals one-in-five Jewish parents with children in mainstream schools more likely to send their kids to a Jewish school following 7 October

A new survey from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) shows that 23 percent of Jewish respondents report that their children have experienced antisemitism at school, in its vicinity or travelling to or from it.

Unsurprisingly, the survey, written by JPR's senior research fellow, Dr Carli Lessof, shows that Jewish children in mainstream schools are more likely to experience antisemitism at school, while those attending Jewish schools are more likely to experience antisemitism while travelling to and from school.

But more intriguingly, one in five Jewish parents with children in mainstream schools say they are more likely to send their children to a Jewish school following the October 7 attacks on Israel and the war in Gaza.

The JPR report, "Antisemitism in schools: how prevalent is it, and how might it affect parents' decisions about where to educate their children post-October 7", draws on data collected in June and July 2024, eight months after the October 7 attacks on Israel and in the context of the war in Gaza.

It explores Jewish parents' understanding of whether their children have experienced antisemitism either at school, in the vicinity of school, and travelling to and from school. The research investigates whether parents would make different choices about where to educate their children in light of the events of October 7 the war in Gaza and the rise of antisemitism in the UK.

Among the key findings are that 23 percent of British Jewish parents reported that their child or children had experienced antisemitism at school (12 per cent), in the vicinity of school (six percent) or travelling to or from school (nine per cent).

Parents of children at a Jewish school are more likely to report that their children experienced antisemitism while travelling to or from school (13 percent) than at school (three percent).

In comparison, those with children at mainstream schools are more likely to report their children experienced antisemitism at school (21 percent) than travelling to/from it (two percent).

Three-quarters (73 percent) of Jewish parents with children in mainstream schools said that the October 7 attacks and the war in Gaza would not affect their choice about where to educate their children, but one in five (20 per cent) said they would now be more likely to send their children to a Jewish school. This proportion doubles (40 percent) for parents whose children have experienced antisemitism in, around or travelling to or from their mainstream school.

Just over half of Jewish parents with children in Jewish schools (52 percent) said that the attacks on Israel and the war in Gaza would not affect their school choice, though most of the remainder (46 percent) saying they would be even more likely to opt for Jewish schooling now.

There are 136 registered Jewish schools in the UK, educating over 36,000 Jewish children. That figure, broken down, shows that about two-thirds of all Jewish children are educated in these schools: almost all strictly Orthodox children learn in Jewish educational settings, as do an estimated 43 per cent of other Jewish children.

JPR says that this represents an extraordinary rise since the 1950s, when there were just over 5,000 Jewish children in Jewish schools.

In 2018 a joint JPR/Ipsos study identified the factors affecting the choice of children's education for British Jews. Those picking a Jewish school had three main drives: wanting their child to have a strong Jewish identity (80 per cent of parents), to have friends with similar values (60 percent) and to attend a school with high academic standards (40-45 percent).

In contrast, the motivations of parents preferring a non-Jewish or mainstream school were: wanting their child to be educated in an environment that is not exclusively Jewish (60 percent), convenience (e.g. being close to where they live) (35 percent), and again, attending a school with high academic standards (30 percent).

JPR executive director Dr Jonathan Boyd said: "It is particularly jarring to see that a quarter of Jewish parents with children in mainstream schools report that their children have experienced antisemitism there. It is also striking to learn that 40 per cent of these parents would be more likely to opt for a Jewish school now, given the choice again.

"While in real terms, these are not huge numbers, they are sufficiently large to potentially affect the delicate balance between supply and demand for places in Jewish schools, so in our post-October 7 context, it becomes more important than ever to monitor any actual changes in preferences if Jewish schools are not to see a repeat of some of the supply/demand issues they have had in the past.

“But more than this, these findings raise critical questions for mainstream school administrators about how to manage the issue of antisemitism in their schools, and indeed for government leaders about social cohesion. This is part of a growing body of evidence demonstrating how antisemitism can drive Jews away from engagement with wider society, and that should be of concern to anyone who cares about building a more cohesive and understanding society.”

The JPR report comes out at the same time as new figures were released on racism in schools, with a report from the Runnymede Trust saying that thousands of children, some as young as four, were sent home from school for racism last year.

Campaigners, who said the figures could indicate that bigotry had become “normalised”, believed that in some cases the children were repeating in the classroom what they heard at home and from right-wingers on TV and radio.

In 2023, 11,619 children were suspended from school for racist behaviour, 25 per cent up from the previous year, and equivalent to almost 60 suspensions per day.

Dr Shabna Begum, who leads the Runnymede Trust, said: “The fact that children and young people are picking up and articulating racism in schools feels entirely predictable in this current climate.

“Recent years have seen media and politicians legitimise hateful language and violent policy that would once have been scorned. Children are reflecting the hatred that has become a normalised feature of our political conversation.”

# [Three dead in strongest ever Typhoon to hit area of Nagasaki in Japan - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #japan, #typhoon, #rain, #wind

Aug 29, 2024

Typhoon Shanshan forces millions to evacuate in Japan, causing power outages, travel disruptions, and factory closures; three dead, 45 injured.

Millions of people were ordered to evacuate their homes on Thursday as [Typhoon](#) Shanshan lashed southwest Japan with strong winds and torrential rain, knocking out power, snarling air traffic, and forcing major factories to close.

At least three people have been killed so far, and scores injured in what authorities have warned could be one of the strongest-ever storms to hit the region.

Toyota 7203.T suspended operations in all domestic plants due to the storm. At the same time, other automakers, Nissan 7201.T and Honda 7267.T, and semiconductor firms Renesas 6723.T, [Tokyo](#) Electron 8035.T, and Rohm 6963.T, also temporarily halted production at some factories.

Funeral parlor employee Tomoki Maeda was in a hearse when the typhoon struck Miyazaki City in southern Kyushu. The storm shattered windows and tore down some buildings' power lines and walls.

"I've never experienced such a strong wind or tornado in my 31 years," Maeda told Reuters.

According to the [weather](#) agency, the typhoon was bringing gusts of around 50 meters per second (180 km per hour/112 mph), strong enough to blow over moving trucks. At 09:00 a.m., it was near Unzen city in Nagasaki Prefecture and moving northwards.

According to Kyushu Electric Power Co., more than 200,000 households in seven prefectures were without power in the afternoon. The utility earlier said there was no impact at its Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in Satsumasendai city, where the storm made landfall earlier on Thursday.

Millions evacuated, travel disrupted

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told a press conference that three people had died and one was missing in incidents related to the typhoon. At the same time, the disaster management agency said 45 had suffered injuries.

The weather agency said that after hovering over Kyushu for the next few days, the storm was expected to approach the central and eastern regions, including the capital, Tokyo, around the weekend.

Authorities said more than 5.2 million people have been issued evacuation notices across the country, mainly in Kyushu but also in some areas of central Japan. These areas were hit by heavy rain on Wednesday, which triggered a landslide.

Madoka Kubo, who runs a hotel in the historic riverside city of Hitoyoshi in Kumamoto prefecture, told Reuters that all her reservations had been canceled, and she was now housing older adults who had been evacuated from nearby areas.

Airlines, including ANA Holdings 9202.T and Japan Airlines 9201.T, have already announced cancellations of nearly 800 flights. Train services have been suspended in many areas of Kyushu, while hundreds of bus and ferry services have also been halted, according to the transport ministry.

Typhoon Shanshan is the latest harsh weather system to hit Japan. It follows Typhoon Ampil, which earlier this month also caused blackouts and evacuations.



# [Facing a difficult economy, Myanmar poor sell their organs in India - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #myanmar, #famine, ##india, #organs

Aug 31, 2024

For a little over \$3,000, Myanmar's poor are selling their organs.

[Under threat of starvation](#), people experiencing poverty in Myanmar traveled to India to [sell their organs](#), according to a CNN investigation published on Friday.

Investigators spoke to Maung Maung in 2022, who [decided to sell his kidneys](#) after witnessing his wife and daughter go without food for three days.

The family had entered into debt after Maung was arrested and tortured by the country's militia junta. Held for weeks on suspicion of transporting resources for the opposition forces, Maung's wife was forced to take out loans in his absence.

In severe debt, Maung told CNN that he decided to sell his kidney.

“In that moment, I felt life was so harsh. There is no other way I could survive other than to rob or kill people for money,” he said. “My wife was the same; she didn't want to stay in this world anymore. But only for the sake of our daughter, we stayed.”

In July 2023, Maung found a buyer and traveled to India for surgery. A Chinese-Burmese businessman had purchased his kidney for 10 million Burmese kyat (\$3,079 or approx. NIS 17,800).

While the amount Maung received was equivalent to nearly twice the annual average urban household income in Myanmar, according to 2019 data from the UN-affiliated Myanmar Information Management Unit, it is significantly less than it is valued on the global black market. According to [a research paper from 2021](#), held by the Parliament of Canada, a black market kidney can range in price from \$50,000-\$120,000

Maung is not the only Myanmar citizen to decide to sell his organs, the investigation found. Many civilians sell their organs to wealthy foreigners using Facebook as a means to find buyers, sometimes with the help of agents who take a fee for their service.

While organ selling is illegal in both India and Myanmar, CNN said it discovered three Burmese-language Facebook accounts dedicated to organ trafficking and spoke to 24 people involved in the black market industry.

Meta told CNN that it removed one of the groups but refused to comment further. The platform's community guidelines do not allow organ trafficking.

In India, organ donation is only allowed among relatives, with few exceptions. However, agents forge documents to enable the operations to go ahead.

In an attempt to circumvent the black market trade, Myanmar's embassy in New Delhi has a committee review submitted documents.

According to the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization, nearly 10,000 kidney transplants involving live donors were carried out across India in 2022.

"To sell a part of your body is a difficult decision for everyone. Nobody wants to do it," an anonymous 26-year-old woman told CNN shortly after advertising her kidney on Facebook in February. "The only reason I am doing this is because I have no choice."

The woman had dreamed of becoming a nurse but was forced to work in a garment factory for a monthly salary of \$100 to support her family.

"I am trying my best to survive amid such a challenging situation. There were days I cried. There were days I didn't have anything to eat when my friends could not help me," she told CNN.

"I want to donate my kidney. My blood type is O. I need money for my aunt who has cancer and needs an operation. I'm 26 years old, and I don't drink. DM me," she wrote in a group, looking for a buyer.

CNN spoke to an anonymous organ buyer, too. A widowed woman married her organ 'donor' to get around the legislation preventing non-familial organ donation. For a price of 12 million kyat (\$3,695), she secured a kidney after being told she would die before she could obtain a kidney legally.

The widow said that she and her new husband had to revise their stories for weeks leading up to the surgery.

"It's an interrogation to confirm whether we are a real couple. But the thing is, they know that we are lying," she said. "The law, by definition, is strict, as are the hospital's rules. However, they allow us to get the treatment by ignoring the red flags and forged documents."

Nine of the ten donors and buyers who spoke to CNN said that they had falsified documents to obtain permissions for a transplant.

Maung had posed as the son-in-law of his buyer.

"I am suffering deep down when I look at my family. They have nothing. Meanwhile, I am also stressed about what lies ahead," Maung told CNN before his surgery. "If I die, I

hope this money could help my wife and daughter for their food and survival, even if it would not last their whole lifetime.”

Maung predicted, “The most I can live is 15 to 20 years, and then I will be gone,” but he insisted he didn’t regret the sale.

“If I had not done this now, my life would be chaotic. No job, no food. My wife and my kid didn’t have anything to eat. All three of us could have been dead or gone crazy.” he said.

An agent also spoke with CNN on the condition of anonymity and said the embassy was aware of document falsification.

“It is an act of saving a life. It is not a bad thing,” he insisted, having purchased a kidney for himself the previous year.

Myanmar households crippled as currency tumbles to record low

A rapid depreciation of Myanmar's currency is pushing up the prices of essentials, including food and medicine, crippling ordinary households in the Southeast Asian country wrecked by civil war and a crumbling economy.

According to four foreign exchange traders, the Myanmar kyat MMK= has been extremely volatile, plunging to a low of 7,500 to the dollar in the black market last week from 5,000 earlier in the month. Two traders said the plunge followed reports that the Myanmar junta was printing more kyat to prop up the currency.

"People are frantically buying (Thai) baht and selling kyat," said a money transfer agent in neighbouring Thailand who asked not to be named. "The only ones selling baht are those sending money back to Myanmar from Thailand."

The kyat has since recovered to around 6,000 to the dollar in the black market, while the central bank's official reference rate was 2,100 on Tuesday, with an online market trading rate of 3,400. But prices of essentials have not come down, six residents said.

"It used to cost about 25,000 kyat (\$11.94) per week for our household groceries until about a month ago, but now it costs about 40,000 kyat," said a 27-year-old housewife from Naypyitaw, Myanmar's capital.

A spokesman for Myanmar's military government did not respond to calls seeking comment.

Once seen as a promising frontier market, Myanmar has been torn by violence since the military's 2021 overthrow of an elected government, which triggered an investor exodus, Western sanctions and protests that have grown into a nationwide armed rebellion.

The junta has steadily lost control of vast areas of the country of 55 million people, including key trade routes with China and Thailand, and has struggled to manage the economy.

Poverty in Myanmar is more widespread than at any time in the last six years, and economic growth is likely to remain at 1% in the current fiscal year, the World Bank said in June.

'No system in place'

At the same time, household incomes have declined - after adjusting for inflation - and unemployment has expanded, the World Bank said in June, underlining growing pressures for large sections of the population.

"It's chaotic and 100% caused by the regime's economic policy and decision-making," said analyst David Mathieson, referring to the rising inflation and other economic woes.

The junta has taken a heavy-handed approach in its attempt to stabilize the currency and the economy.

Since June, it has arrested at least 56 people, including gold traders, foreign exchange dealers, and agents selling foreign real estate, to try and stem the kyat's slide.

Two grocers said that the currency has fallen, and the cost of imported products, including essentials like cooking oil brought in from Thailand, has jumped in recent weeks.

A rise in transportation costs, due to a shortage of imported fuel that led to long queues in several parts of the country last week, has further impacted retail prices, they said. "The price has doubled or tripled, due to transportation costs," said a grocery store owner in Mawlamyine, a city in southern Myanmar, referring to some vegetables.

Two pharmaceutical officials and a doctor said medicines, including blood glucose strips used by diabetes patients, have become between 10% and 30% more expensive in the last month.

Yet, they said, the availability of certain medicines is limited even at inflated prices due to the impact of ongoing fighting on border trade.

The National Unity Government (NUG), comprising former lawmakers and other junta opponents, said the military has no proper plan to manage the current economic situation.

"They have no system in place and are simply printing more kyats, which is fuelling inflation and creating an economic crisis like we've never seen before," said spokesman Kyaw Zaw.