Harris vows Gaza peace, Trump tone darkens in final hours

AFP- Kamala Harris courted voters angered by the Gaza war while Donald Trump doubled down on violent rhetoric with a comment about journalists being shot as the tense US election campaign entered its final hours.

The Democratic vice president and the Republican former president frantically blitzed several swing states as they tried to win over the last holdouts with less than 36 hours left until polls open on Election Day on Tuesday.

Trump predicted a "landslide", while Harris told a raucous rally in must-win Michigan that "we have momentum – it's on our side."

The 2024 race is going down to the wire, with more key states effectively tied at this point than in any comparable election. Over 77.6 million people have cast early votes, around half of the total ballots cast in 2020.

With the clock ticking, Harris, 60, spent the day in Michigan where she risks losing the critical support of a 200,000-strong Arab-American community that has denounced US handling of the Israel-Hamas war.

"As president, I will do everything in my power to end the war in Gaza," Harris said at the start of her speech at Michigan State University, noting that there were leaders of the community present.

– 'Demonic' –

But the rest of the speech was upbeat, with Harris spending more time on urging people to get out and vote than on attacks on Trump.

“We got two days to get this done,” she said.

Earlier, Harris quoted scripture in a majority-Black church in Detroit, Michigan and urging Americans to look beyond Trump.

“Let us turn the page and write the next chapter of our history,” she said.

Trump on Sunday zigzagged through Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Georgia – the three biggest swing-state prizes in the Electoral College system that awards US states influence according to their population.

The 78-year-old Trump, the oldest major party candidate in US history, added to his increasingly dark rhetoric by musing to supporters in Lititz, Pennsylvania, that he wouldn’t mind if journalists were shot.

Discussing his the near-miss assassination attempt against him in July, he said to laughter that to be hit again “somebody would have to shoot through the fake news – and I don’t mind that so much.”

Trump called Democrats “demonic” and, despite no evidence of any meaningful election cheating so far, claimed that Democrats in Pennsylvania “are fighting so hard to steal this damn thing.”

Adding to fears that he would not accept a defeat in 2024, Trump added that he “shouldn’t have left” the White House after he lost his 2020 reelection effort to Joe Biden.

– RFK Jr controversy –

Trump meanwhile said in Macon, Georgia, that he had asked vaccine-skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr, who dropped his own presidential bid to support Trump, to work on “women’s health” and “pesticides.”

His comments came a day after Kennedy caused consternation by

saying that a Trump White House would order US water systems to remove fluoride from public water supplies.

Later in another rambling speech in Kinston, North Carolina Trump said “we’re going to have on Tuesday a landslide that’s too big to rig.”

The polls however show that the result is likely to be historically tight.

A final New York Times/Siena poll Sunday flagged incremental changes in swing states, but the results from all seven remained within the margin of error.

Harris got a boost Saturday as the final Des Moines Register poll for Iowa – seen as a highly credible test of wider public sentiment – showed a stunning turnaround, with Harris ahead in a state won easily by Trump in 2016 and 2020.

In the last hours, both candidates are desperately trying to shore up their bases, and win over any undecided voters.

Pollsters have noted an erosion in Black support for Harris.

But with abortion rights a top voter concern, her campaign has hailed the large proportion of women turning out among early voters.

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