

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / 39 dead in fire at Mexico migrant centre

Hello, this is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service with reports and analysis from across the world. The latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising. This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service. I'm Nick Miles and at 13 Hours GMT on Tuesday, the 28th of March, these are our main stories. 39 people have been killed in northern Mexico in a fire at a migrant centre near the US border. Police in Nashville are investigating why an attack has shot dead six people at a school, including three children. And there's a 10th day of strikes in France in protests at plans to raise the retirement age. Also in this podcast. Twitter is burning itself down from the inside, I fear, and it's going to rapidly become a ghost town. We look at the latest changes to Twitter. Many thousands of people use the Mexican city of Sudat Juarez as a stopping off point in their attempt to enter the United States. Well, late yesterday evening local time, there was a fire at a centre being used to hold some of the people detained by the authorities there. As we record this podcast, it's confirmed that at least 39 of them died. Videos from local media show bodies being pulled from the burning building. Phoebe Hobson, who's reported from Latin America extensively, has been monitoring the story. What we do know is that a fire started late on Monday night at the National Institute of Migration where some migrants are being held. It's believed the fire was started deliberately and so far 39 people have been killed. The facility said 68 men from Central and South America were being held there. And there were reports of some disturbances on local media last night at the facility of people being held there and protesting lighting mattresses and the fires being spread. People, of course, there are often held in locked rooms, so that's very disturbing in terms of what could have happened. The Attorney General in Mexico has said he's launched an inquiry, but we haven't had any sort of press statements, any sort of formal communication from the authorities yet. But what we've seen is, as you mentioned, very distressing videos of people being pulled out of the building, being laid on the floor. People are really anxious to know what's happened to the people they know inside the facility. Sure. And it's a focal point for migrants from across Latin America and the Caribbean to come into the United States. And there have been larger numbers, the normal arriving at the border in recent months, partly because of politics in the United States. Yes, so politics in the United States really dictates what happens in the Mexican border. More people had been arriving in these border areas, especially Ciudad Juarez, which very closely borders El Paso in Texas, because it was thought that migrants had been expecting an end to Title 42, which is a very controversial policy that was put in place by the Trump administration that gives the U.S. government powers to expel migrants trying to enter the country and send them back to Mexico or elsewhere. The Trump administration at the time was criticized of using the pandemic as a pretext to cracking down on migrants. So it had thought that people were going to Ciudad Juarez thinking that this was going to be repealed. Joe Biden had said previously that he wanted to distance himself from the policy, but that hasn't happened. I will just say, though, that the town is very, it's a very porous relationship between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso Texas. So if you have the right documentation, you can travel very freely between the two places. That was Phoebe Hobson. In the U.S. itself, people in the state of Tennessee are still struggling to come to terms with the deaths of three children and three adults in a shooting at an elementary school in the city of Nashville. Police are continuing their investigation and say that it was a carefully planned attack by 28-year-old Audrey Hale, who was shot dead at the scene. Police describe the attacker as a biological woman who'd been identifying as a male. Our

correspondent Nomiya Iqbal is in Nashville. Well, here at the, just outside the school, as always, with these shootings there, there is a huge media presence. As you can imagine, this is a big, big story here in the U.S. Police are still trying to piece together exactly what they know, particularly about Audrey Hale, who was said to be a former student here at the school. One of the officers has said that the investigation is obviously still ongoing, and what detectives are saying so far is possibly that Audrey Hale had some resentment for having a goal to go to the school, but we don't exactly know what that detail is. In the immediate aftermath of the shooting, there was some confusion about the exact identity of Audrey Hale. Initially, we were told the attacker was a woman and then transgender, but a police spokesman has described Hale as a biological woman who, on a social media profile, used male pronouns, so was identifying as a man in recent months. But once again, another mass shooting involving very small children, and as you can imagine, it's once again put gun politics into focus here in this country. Yeah, absolutely. I mean, it's a terrible mixture between sort of anger and sadness. One of the videos I was seeing, one of the sisters of somebody who died in the attack yesterday, was saying, like, I don't want to grow up as an only child. So, terrible sound a bit. Is there a sense of anger once more, though? Of course. There were three children, Evelyn Dyke House, Hallie Scruggs, and William Kinney, nine years old and under, and three adults who've been identified

as Catherine Coons, who was the head of the school. One parent described her as a saint, Cynthia Peck, a substitute teacher, and Michael Hill, a custodian. Now, this school is a very small, private religious school. Kate is for nursery school age up to 12 years old. And so, once again, you've got parents having to come to terms with the fact that, you know, school isn't a place of safety as they think it might be in this country. Now, as Nomi at Iqbal, the streets of central Paris and many other cities across France have been filling up with rubbish after weeks of strikes. And many places are also jammed now with thousands of protesters. This is the 10th nationwide day of strikes and demonstrations against a new law that raises the age at which people can get their state pension. The government says a record number of police are going to be deployed across France to confront what it describes as a major risk to public order. Laurent Nunes is police chief in Paris. There's a tense situation. There's a desire on the part of some to create an insurrectional climate, that's for sure. But it's not an insurrection. Law enforcement is present. They'll still be present this afternoon to maintain law and order. Our correspondent in Paris is Hugh Scofield. Just down the road from the Place de la République on Boulevard du Chantrenois, and the procession is moving past me now. It's been moving for the last 20 minutes or so, headed by a big, big squadron of about 200 riot police. Right now, it's fine. I mean, everyone's very joyous, happy, colourful, noisy. But we know that it's not during the demonstrations that we have problems. It will be after the demonstrations, as evening kicks in, as most people disperse. That's when we're having the problems. That's when, on Thursday, you know, the very serious street violence kicked off between far left activists, the black blocks, as they call them here, and the police. And I'm afraid there's a very, very much an expectation that something similar will happen today. We'll have to see, of course. Indeed, we will. Hugh, the focus of all this and the anger is this new law. What sign, if any, is there that the President might back down? Well, none at all, really, at the moment. I mean, he's... Macron has said over and over again that the law has now gone through Parliament. Controversially,

we know, but it has gone through Parliament. It's on its way to the Constitutional Council, which is a body which reviews the constitutionality of laws. And if it passes that, then it will become law and be promulgated. Now, there are, you know, still some possibilities that this Constitutional Council might decide that there were problems with the law. If that were to happen, then it would be mightily convenient for everyone concerned, who I think everyone would like to see this day torn to this tense juncture. That was Hugh Scofield. Next to North Korea, which has said for a long time that it has tactical nuclear weapons. They're smaller weapons, with a shorter range that can actually be used on a single battlefield. Now, the state newspaper has published photographs that some say back up that claim. I spoke to the Defence and Security Analyst Jonathan Marcus, and I started off by asking him how worrying this news is. Well, it's very worrying. These North Korean publicity shots as so frequently, you know, they look almost amusing. They look like something out of a B-movie 1950s thriller film. But the reality is that the North Koreans are making steady progress technologically. What they appear to be showing here in part are what they claim to be smaller nuclear warheads. Now, whether these are warheads designed to be, as you say, on tactical or so-called shorter range missiles, or whether they might be lighter, more compact warheads that could potentially be put onto a much longer range system, like their intercontinental ballistic missiles, that remains to be seen. And I think over the next few days, analysts will be pouring over these photos, trying to take measurements, trying to get an understanding of particular design aspects. It's the usual thing, you know, rather strange and mechanical looking objects, but always backed up with rather enticing wall charts of, you know, different size projectiles and so on. And I think intelligence officers and indeed independent analysts will be looking at all of this to try to glean as much information as they can. So people will be assessing to what extent that there is real progress being made. What constraints are there to their nuclear program at the moment? Well, there are clearly technical constraints. There are no other constraints. There are no diplomatic constraints or anything like that. The U.S. efforts to halt North Korea's nuclear program, and indeed in the past, to try and, as they rather aspirationally hoped, to roll it backwards, have just not come to pass. North Korea does still have many technical limitations. But what it has proven over recent years, despite all of the sanctions, its isolation and so on, is that it is able to master many of the problems in terms of developing not just an ever more effective nuclear arsenal, but also a panoply of weapons potentially to carry such warheads. We've seen just in recent days a whole variety of weapons tests of different range missiles, of cruise missiles and so on. So these are very capable, very inventive people who, yes, face all sorts of huge technological hurdles, but actually have a very clear track record of being able to surmount them and to overcome many of the problems that they face. That was Jonathan Marko as a Defence and Security Analyst. There are more changes afoot at Twitter. Its owner, Elon Musk, has announced a shake-up of the Twitter blue feature. Currently, Twitter blue subscribers pay for a range of exclusive benefits, including the privilege of having a verified blue tick on their accounts. From April 15, only Twitter blue users will be allowed to vote in online polls and have their posts recommended in the For You feed. The social media consultant Drew Benvy explained what these changes will mean for all Twitter users. What it's about really is making Twitter some money. Only Twitter blue accounts, so paid for accounts, will appear in this For You page,

a way of experiencing social media content made most popular by TikTok. And it's basically accounts being shown to anybody, not just those they follow. So it's a way to make a Twitter user more visible and more famous, and that's being made exclusive to paying users from April 15. What I'm experiencing at the moment is not what Elon Musk says is happening. He says this is the only way to get rid of bots. Now bots are these harmful accounts that are fake and that maybe spread spam or cause harm through things like bullying. The theory is, if you make someone pay, the likelihood is that they will be real and they won't pay if they are a bot. I think the problem here is actually only going to get worse because if somebody really wants to cause harm through a relatively small fee, they are now prominent accounts. When this Twitter blue pay for verification first came out, people were impersonating Elon Musk himself. They're impersonating governments, large brands, and it was causing damage. And I think this is going to be one to watch. I personally think this is a really harmful precedent. You need to have people to keep a social network safe. This is all about safety of users at the end of the day. Twitter is burning itself down from the inside, I fear, and it's going to rapidly become a ghost town. Drew Benvy. Coming up. My head is still spinning. Sometime I woke up in the middle of the night and said, huh? Is this still happening? And I go back to sleep and I'm like, oh man, what am I going to do?

We hear from a winner of this year's polar music prize. The closest the music industry comes to a Nobel Prize. Here in Britain, there's been a breakthrough in a high-profile murder case. In 2008, the body of 23-year-old student Martin Vic Magnussen was discovered under rubble in a basement in the exclusive Mayfair area of London. A billionaire's son who fled to Yemen within hours of the death has now admitted involvement to the BBC. Farouk Abdul Haq is the only suspect and remains at large, despite being named in an international arrest warrant. In a new documentary for the BBC's Arabic service, he's spoken for the first time to my colleague Nawal Almagafi. So I started looking into this story when it happened in 2008. I was actually at university myself and had some Norwegian friends who told me that their friend had been murdered in London. Now, I'm from Yemeni heritage, so they told me about the main suspect, Farouk Abdul Haq, and I actually knew about him and I knew about his family. They're this really wealthy, powerful family in Yemen. And so I started looking into it then. I had met with the father back then. And then two years later, it was one of the first stories that I pitched to the BBC. And so I went to Yemen and I looked for Farouk, but it wasn't the right time to be searching for him. He had so much protection. His father, Shaher Abdul Haq, was close friends with the then president Ali Abdullah

Saleh. So we were actually threatened when we were searching for him and we dropped the story. Now, a decade later, it just felt like the right time to go searching for him again. So that's what we did. And I was able to reach him on social media. He didn't know that we were recording these conversations. What happened was, is when I reached out to him, I was clear that I was a journalist. But I think it was because he's so isolated. He's in Yemen. It's not a country where he grew up. He only went there because there's no extradition treaty with the UK. And it's where his father is from. When he started talking to someone on social media, who knew where he was living, who also related to his life here in the UK, his life in Cairo and the US, you know, he felt like he could talk to me. Over time, I started putting to him the questions that her parents have been wondering for the last 15 years about what happened that night to their daughter. And extraordinarily, he opened up to me. Ultimately, we didn't know

if he'd actually answer any of the questions about what happened that night. But once he did, you know, the first thing I did was reach out to her father. I went to Oslo and we actually played him some of what Farouk said. And we're going to play it to our listeners now. But what about Kandak? It's too cold there. I don't like the weather. I'm mad. I'm angry. I mean, I was furious. So I couldn't imagine how you feel. Yeah, I'm furious. That's the point. Yeah. Oh, I'm going to get him one way or the other. That was the voice there of the father of Martin Vick Magnussen, who was killed back in 2008, talking to the BBC's Nawal Almagafi. And you can watch her documentary

on our website. Now, is the Western world guilty of double standards when it comes to human rights?

That is the conclusion of a new report by the rights group Amnesty International.

It suggests the West's robust response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine only highlights what it calls the deplorable lack of meaningful action to address grave human rights violations in other countries. Agnes Calamar is Amnesty International's Secretary General. From Amnesty International, what stands out is not so much the military support, frankly, because we have seen military support in the past. Many times, in fact, what stands out for us is the commitment and the language and the discourse around justice, accountability, denunciation of the breakdown of the rule of law, denunciation of the violation of the UN Charter, that we have not seen, that combination we have not seen. And we would have liked to see that replicated in other context. Instead, for the people of Palestine, 2022 in the West Bank was the deadliest year in decade. For the people of Ethiopia, 2022 was part of what may be the deadliest conflict in the 21st century. Egypt is turning into a vast prison for political prisoners and anyone who dissents. So this is what we're pointing out. It is the robustness of the human rights response to Ukraine that has not been duplicated. And those double standards are undermining what can be done and should be achieved for the people of Ukraine. That was Agnes Calamar. For the last 13 years, Italy's fertility rate has been in decline. It is one of the lowest in the world, and that's having an impact on its economy. So why is it falling? Davina Gupta is looking at population around the world for the BBC's Business Daily programme and she told us more. Italy's population that's been in decline since the 90s and in fact it recorded its lowest birth rate in more than 150 years and we're talking about just below 400,000 children being born last year. Now, to understand this, you have to rewind the clock to the 50s where Italy saw an economic boom and its population increased with more young people joining the workforce. But the policies needed to support more women to join the workforce like daycare centres actually didn't keep up with the changing times. So even today, there's a huge gap of kindergarten and nursery, especially in the southern part of Italy, which is not seen as more affluent part of the country. Then there is an increase in immigration of young people to other European countries in search of job opportunities. So effectively, you have less number of people staying back in the country, willing to start a family. Now Italy is also among the countries where cultural conservatism about a working mother has played a big part in delaying the policies that we talked about earlier because it's almost expected from women to leave their jobs once they become a mom. So women in Italy are more likely to work in less secure jobs than on short term contracts and therefore they don't feel the financial means to start a family. And that's what my colleague Hannah Mulane found out when she spoke to Melissa, a working mother based in the capital room. Personally, I don't have any support from the government, for example. I don't work for an industry that can give me

the financial support. When I give birth to my children, I have to work immediately because if I don't work, I don't have money. It's a problem of all women that work like me. How did that make you feel? I want to have time to take care of my daughter that without any other thoughts that is not her. But I can't. I have to work. So it's very stressful.

Yeah, I can imagine. And how do you manage it? I wanted to have a special relationship with my children. And in the kindergarten, I absolutely send her when she was 10 months, but not before. I don't have any babysitting. As I did when my first son was born, he was sleeping in my chest and I worked with him in my arms. That was Melissa, a working mother from Rome talking to the BBC's

Hannah Malaine and Davina Gupta. You're going to hear more about populations around the world on

business daily. They are a talented and disparate group, an Estonian composer, Arvo Part, Chris Blackwell,

the record producer who signed Bob Marley and the Whalers, and the singer, Angelique Kidgeoll. But they all share one thing. They've just been named as the 2023 winners of the Polar Music Prize. It was set up in the 1980s by the manager of ABBA, Stig Anderson, and is seen by many as the most prestigious award a musician can win. Our entertainment correspondent Colin Patterson has been speaking to Angelique Kidgeoll about receiving it and a lifetime of work that has taken her from

her home in Benin to many other parts of the world. My head is still spinning. Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and say, huh? Is this still happening? And I go back to sleep and I'm like, oh man, what am I going to do?

Angelique Kidgeoll is rather delighted to have been awarded the Polar Music Prize, often described as the closest thing to a Nobel Prize for music.

Let me just reduce some of the names who have been presented with this before. Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell, Dizzy Gillespie.

I wish my mom and dad were still here because my mom and dad always said, you don't know what to moral hold. You are all for great things and I'm like, yeah, right?

What would your mom have said if she knew? Oh my god, if my mom was still alive, I can guarantee you

that she will be at that ceremony and we stand up and say, well, I take full credit for it.

I taught her everything.

The award has given her the chance to live back in a career which started on stage more than 50 years ago.

When you're a young girl singing and being in any way in Africa, man, you are against so many odds. It's unbelievable because the society, conservative as it is, we don't have an identity when we are born. We are a product that our father take and can marry to anybody. And for me, my father was absolutely the person that stand. I mean, family, society, for me to be able to sing.

That's why I said my feminism is not against men. It's against people that don't understand that women have to exist side by side with men. It's often asked what's the point of lifetime achievement awards, but for artists, they can lead to better festival bookings, their own gigs being in bigger venues and record companies reissuing their work.

Courtney Love has written a very interesting article in the last couple of weeks about her fury at how only 8% of the inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame are women.

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How frustrating is a statistic like that for you?

Well, I've been fighting for women's rights for so long in the music business also.

The business of music is dominated by men and people that make the decision are men.

So we have to think about the whole infrastructure about it. And that's one of the things that I'm really happy to be working on being a part of the trustee of the Grammys.

We need diversity. We need gender equality in everything that we do.

Because the way it is set, it is set to profit the men all the time.

You've been singing for more than 50 years now. Is it easier for Africans to have global careers while staying in Africa now? How much have things changed?

Well, a lot of things have changed because of the technology of recording today.

I had to leave my country. I have to fled the communist dictatorship of my country

to have a career, to build a career. Today you can stay in Africa and it's instantaneous.

You put something on YouTube. The next day is a huge hit everywhere. Welcome to the new world.

And that's all from us for now. But there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later

on. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it, you can send us an email.

The address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on Twitter at Global News Pod.

This edition was mixed by Louis Alsop and the producer was Olivia Noon and Adam Trowdry.

The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Nick Miles and until next time, goodbye.