

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Hamas says Israeli bombardment has killed several of its leaders

This is the Global News Podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Gareth Barlow and at 13 GMT on Thursday, the 19th of October.

These are our main stories.

The British Prime Minister arrives in Israel and made another flurry of diplomacy as preparations continue for the reopening of the crossing between Egypt and Gaza, through which aid will be transferred.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela calls for the US to continue easing sanctions in return for democratic reform.

Also in this podcast...

The 2023 Saha of Price for Freedom of Thought has been awarded to Gina Masamini.

The EU's Human Rights Prize has been awarded to the late Masa Amini and the Iranian women's protest movement.

And we hear about the man who created the world's most high-tech, dangerous and popular 3D printed gun.

But first, after President Biden of the United States, the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak becomes the latest world leader to visit Israel after the deadly Hamas attacks of October 7th.

He's been meeting his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a joint news conference, Mr Sunak confirmed Britain's support for the Israelis.

Mr Netanyahu, meanwhile, stressed the importance of the military operation and thumped the lectern as he invoked the spirit of Britain's struggles during the Second World War. And continued support as we prosecute and win this just war against the modern barbarians, the worst monsters on the planet.

Thank you, Rishi, for coming here.

Well, Prime Minister, thank you for your warm words and for welcoming me to Israel.

And I want to share the deep condolences of the British people and stress that we absolutely support Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law, to go after Hamas, to take back hostages, deter further incursions, and to strengthen your security for the long term.

Now, I know that you are taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians in direct contrast to the terrorists of Hamas, which seek to put civilians in harm's way.

And we also recognize that the Palestinian people are victims of Hamas, too.

And that is why I welcome your decision yesterday that you took to ensure that routes into Gaza will be opened for humanitarian aid to enter.

I'm glad that you made that decision.

The last thing for me to close on is this.

You describe this as Israel's darker star.

Well, then it's for me to say I'm proud to stand here with you in Israel's darker star.

As your friend, we will stand with you in solidarity.

We will stand with your people, and we also want you to win.

The voice there of the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunaka, before him, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Our Middle East analyst, Sebastian Usher, was listening to the two leaders.

I put to him that the comments were particularly strong.

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From Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, yes.

And we've had strong words from him pretty much every day.

I mean, he has, you didn't play the clip there, but he before that described Hamas as not just the new ISIS, but the new Nazis.

So his rhetoric, again, as we heard, there is essentially saying that Hamas is the most extreme, the most monstrous force in the world at the moment.

For the British Prime Minister, Rishi Sunaka, I mean, we heard it all there.

I mean, this was to show solidarity both from the people, UK, but also personal, very similar to what President Biden did yesterday.

But perhaps differently for President Biden, I mean, obviously,

US is a very, very powerful, most significant ally of Israel.

And he had to have something happen after that, which was the decision to open the Rafa crossing.

I don't think that anything is expected like that from Rishi Sunaka's visit in actual moving things forward.

But you also heard that message from him that he absolutely believes in a right of Israel to defend itself, to take action against Hamas, but it should remain within international law.

With regards to the situation in Gaza, we've seen some reports that Israel has killed some senior Hamas commanders.

What do we know?

And also, should we take this as accurate?

Why would Hamas be saying that these commanders have been killed?

This is, as you say, media inside Gaza, so essentially controlled by Hamas.

And they're saying that the head of the national security forces inside Gaza,

Jihad Mahaisen, was killed along with his family, which has happened quite regularly.

Israel's been providing a list of this, and because they're attacking them in their homes,

I mean, there is members of a family have been killed pretty much every time.

Also saying that the widow of one of the founders of Hamas, Abdul Aziz Al-Rantisi, and also quite a figure in her own right, she was the first woman to go on the Hamas and Politburo, has been killed overnight.

In answer to your question about why Hamas would do it, well, they celebrate death.

They martyred him.

So they are actually quite proud of it.

I think where we need to be more careful is perhaps their figures more widely of the deaths in Gaza.

I think that was brought to the fore by the hospital blast,

where we're still not really sure how many people killed the original assessment of 500.

It may turn out to be considerably less.

So I think that's where some skepticism is probably more necessary.

Our Middle East analyst, Sebastian Usher.

Well, hundreds of aid workers are gathering on the Egyptian side of the RAFA crossing, hoping to get aid for Gaza flowing.

The Israelis pledge not to prevent the aid deliveries unless supplies reach Hamas.

Motion Sion is from the Egyptian Food Bank, one of the charities on the Egyptian side

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of the RAFA crossing, waiting to provide aid.

I mean, Bennett Jones asked him how prepared they are to begin moving supplies.

Everything is ready to go.

We have around 120 trucks that is completely paid for by the Egyptian people.

I run the Egyptian Food Bank and I got with me from Cairo 41 trucks.

And I'm ready with 50 more in Cairo.

Once I get those through, I will push the extra 50.

Everything is paid for by the Egyptian people from their donations.

And then you have in the Arish airport, you have at least seven or eight cargo planes worth of supplies from international development organizations like the WHO and from countries like Jordan, UAE, Qatar, and Russia, I think sent the plane also today.

You have all this stationed at the border and everything is ready to be dispatched in a moment.

How long do you think you might have to wait?

We hope to get things through either tonight or tomorrow.

But actually, this is not the first time we hear something like that.

Three or four days ago, Secretary Blinken also said the supplies will go through.

And then next day, the prime minister, Netanyahu's office said, no, no, no, we deny that.

We don't know anything about that.

And we will not stop bombing.

And they continued bombing.

I hope the Israeli side sticks to the announcement by President Biden and they stop bombing so we can get through.

I repeat, the only problem that's preventing aid from getting through is that Israel is bombing everywhere in Gaza, including just near the crossing from Gaza side every day, countless bombs. And without it, there is no one there.

And I have to repeat to everyone listening, there is no one there in that area.

There is zero people.

What are they bombing?

That was motion signed there.

Well, let's take a look at some of the day's other events.

The European Union's highest human rights award, the Sakharov Prize, has been given to the Women Life Freedom Movement in Iran and posthumously to Massar Amini.

The announcement was made by the president of the European Parliament, Roberta Mazzola.

I am very proud to announce that the 2023 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought

has been awarded to Gina Massar Amini and the Women Life and Freedom Movement in Iran.

Massar Amini died in custody just over a year ago after being detained by Iran's morality police.

It sparked a wave of protests across the country and protests around the world.

Roberta Mazzola said it marked a turning point that triggered a women-led movement that's making history.

The world has heard the chants of women, life, liberty.

Three words that have become a rallying cry for all those standing up for equality, for dignity and for freedom in Iran.

So let's today's prize serve as our tribute to the brave and defiant women, men and young people in Iran

who despite coming under increasing pressure are leading the push for change.

The European Parliament hears you, the world sees you and we are with you.

That was Roberta Mazzola, the president of the European Parliament on the awarding of the Sakharov Prize to Massar Amini and the Women Life Freedom Movement in Iran.

Researchers from the International Atomic Energy Agency have, for the first time, taken samples of fish and sea water from a port near the devastated Fukushima nuclear power plant.

Japan has been taking regular samples since it began releasing wastewater

from the stricken facility back in August. Shema Khalil reports.

In addition to seawater, the team of scientists from China, South Korea and Canada will collect samples of fish and sea bed residue to compare the levels of tritium and other radioactive substances from those taken last year. The samples will be sent to labs in the respective countries for independent review. China has sharply reacted to the discharge by imposing a blanket ban on Japanese seafood imports. The wastewater has gone through a liquid processing system that removes most radio nucleides except tritium.

Our Tokyo correspondent, Shema Khalil. Over the past decade, there has been a wave of innovation in 3D printed guns. The weapons have been seen in the hands of gun enthusiasts, organised criminals,

paramilitaries, insurgents and terrorists across all continents. Within this world,

one pseudonymous figure has emerged as a symbol for the cause of universal access to firearms,

JSTARC 1809. He created the world's most high-tech, dangerous and popular 3D printed gun and established an influential network. A new report published by the International

Centre for the Study of Radicalisation has tracked down JSTARC 1809. A German national

has links to far-right groups and is a self-identifying incel. That's someone who is single but against his will. James Kopnell has been talking to Dr Rajan Basra who led the research.

JSTARC, when he spoke with this pseudonym, presented himself as a champion of the right to bear arms because he thought it was a human right for everyone to have access to a gun.

But Ivan covered messages that he wrote anonymously and they really contradict that public persona

that he presented to the world because anonymously he was xenophobic, he was racist,

he made anti-Semitic comments and he actually endorsed far-right terrorism. And so seeing

that difference between his pseudonymous public persona and his anonymous or seemingly anonymous

comments is really quite striking. There are plenty of people on the internet and other places with objectionable or difficult views. This person though has had a huge influence.

He has, exactly. He really spearheaded this movement that is now worldwide of people who are developing 3D printed gun designs, disseminating them, different parts of the internet and encouraging people to use them. But so far very little is actually known about his identity.

When he would make public appearances he would wear a mask, sunglasses, he would be very cautious

about revealing details of his life. But by following an open-source trail, I've managed to

locate various profiles he had on different platforms and unmask him literally and figuratively

as Jacob Doigu, he was a German man and he was an incel, an involuntarily celibate person, where he blamed his lack of romantic and sexual relations on women, on feminism, on society, and he felt very emasculated and felt that he'd lost his power as a man. And this aspect to him is totally unknown until now. Beyond the individual, is it possible that there'll be a move to regulate this sector more heavily? It's possible, but these guns were deliberately designed to not include regulated components. So the main gun that he chose doesn't need anything that requires a license across the European Union, for instance. So that makes it very difficult for the authorities to counter the issue. And they can make it illegal to possess the digital blueprints or download them and some countries are updating legislation to that effect. But even with that legislation in place it would still be difficult to counter this. It really poses a challenge for law enforcement. That was Dr Rajan Basra.

Still to come.

That was one of Italy's most popular singers who's been arrested as part of a mafia roundup. Meanwhile, the Biden administration is easing a raft of sanctions against Venezuela 24 hours after the government of President Maduro and the opposition agree terms for an election next year. Mr Maduro announced the news from the presidential palace in Caracas. Economic freedoms for investment, commerce, development and growth. I call for a stop to all sanctions and for a steady progressive lifting of them until we get a Venezuela absolutely free of sanctions. Ties between Caracas and Washington have been slowly warming since early 2022 when senior US officials flew there for rare talks with their Venezuelan counterparts.

Online Latin America editor Vanessa Beschluter has been following this for the newsroom. Clearly the sanctions that the US imposed did not succeed in removing President Maduro from office. If anything, Mr Maduro's position and power has become more entrenched over the recent years and he has been able to blame the dire economic situation in Venezuela on the US sanctions. So that's actually benefited him in a way. But of course now with this deal between the Venezuelan opposition and government representatives, the US is looking towards easing those sanctions in order to provide an incentive for the Venezuelan government to stick to a blueprint for creating more free and fair elections in the next year.

Why now? Why in 2023, almost the end of the year?

Because the energy crisis sparked by Russia's war on Ukraine made the US look around for alternative sources of oil and gas. And of course Venezuela has got the world's largest proven reserves of oil. So that was an obvious place to go and look for new resources. But of course this new deal that was struck and signed on Tuesday has given the US more leeway to deal with a government that they decry as authoritarian and that they say cheated in the 2018 elections. Talk to us about the state of the opposition in Venezuela because like we say, they had a pop at Trinidad and St Nicholas Maduro. There was a point that Juan Guaido even tried to kind of mobilize the military and the police to his side. That didn't come off. What state of health is the opposition now? Juan Guaido is now an exile in the US. He left in April and then in June he was barred from running from office. And the opposition, which is historically always bitterly divided, has decided to try and pull together ahead of these elections next year. They're going to hold a primary on Sunday. The front runner is a 56-year-old woman called Maria Corina Machado. But it has to be said she is currently still barred from running for office because a close ally of Mr. Maduro was the Comptroller General at the time and barred her

from office. This is something that the US wants to remedy. We'll follow that story closely. That was Vanessa Bushluckter there. On the second day of his trip to North Korea, Russia's Foreign Minister Sege Lavrov is doubling down on his country's support. The US and others he said are conducting a dangerous policy towards North Korea that includes what he called nuclear elements. Pyongyang, meanwhile, has started supplying munitions to Russia and there are fears that Kremlin could reciprocate by transferring advanced military technology. For more, I spoke to our correspondent in the region, G. McKenzie. As these two countries have become ever more isolated, really we've watched their interests become more aligned, you know, especially with the war in Ukraine basically means that both these countries are now in confrontation with the US. So since the very beginning of this war, North Korea has been very one of the very few open supporters of it. But it's in the last few months that we've really seen the countries get much closer. The pinnacle, I think, was that meeting between Kim Jong-un and Vladimir Putin in Russia's Far East last month. But it is thought that this meeting today with Lavrov in North Korea is actually paving the way for Vladimir Putin to be able to return the favor and to visit Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang. But why all the coziness now? Well, it's widely believed that these two countries have, as you say, reached an arms deal, that North Korea has essentially agreed to send ammunition to Russia to help it continue fighting its war in Ukraine, and that in return it's going to get money, but possibly even military equipment, military equipment that it desires. You're speaking to us from South Korea. How do neighboring nations like South Korea, like Japan, view this increasingly close relationship? They certainly watch with unease. I mean, there are questions here about how far Russia would go in terms of supporting North Korea. Certainly politicians in South Korea, they do scratch their heads a bit. They can't quite understand why Russia would be prepared to, for example, send North Korea advanced military technology. It's just not in Russia's interest to make North Korea any more dangerous than it already is. It really is seen that Russia is using this relationship, not just to get the ammunition and the artillery that it needs for the war, but really as a means to put pressure on the U.S. to show the U.S. that it has the potential to destabilize the situation here in North East Asia. I think people here feel that Russia is quite enjoying being able to needle the U.S. and to show it is able to influence this region. And then you have North Korea, which is under these incredibly strict sanctions. So at the moment, it's looking for all the help it can get. And if it can get military support from Russia, then that really strengthens its hand. That was Jim Mackenzie there. Well, let's stick in the region because leaders from across the world have been meeting in Beijing this week to mark 10 years of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The trillion-dollar program has brought new infrastructure to more than 100 countries, most of them in the developing world. One of the most recent projects is Indonesia's WUSH, which is Southeast Asia's first-ever high-speed rail line. But like many Chinese-backed BRI projects, it's not without controversy. Our Asia Business correspondent, Nick Marsh, was one of the first people to take a ride and send this report from Jakarta. Southeast Asia has got its first high-speed rail line. It's faster than anything in the U.S., faster than anything in the U.K. It's appropriately called WUSH, and it connects the Indonesian capital Jakarta with the city of Bandung. It's Chinese-made with a top speed of 350 kilometers an hour, and it turns what was a three-hour journey into a 45-minute one. And we don't leave for another half an hour,

but there's already hundreds of people queuing up to go through the ticket barriers. Lots of them are wearing brightly-colored traditional batik shirts, which is what you wear on formal occasions here in Indonesia. Lots of people are laughing, smiling. Everyone's in a really good mood.

This woman was taking selfies with her friends. She told me that she and 100 colleagues from the local university had decided that they wanted to experience WUSH. Then it was time to get on. WUSH is actually an acronym in the Indonesian language. It means time-saving and reliable. Now, this, of course, is yet another Belt and Road initiative project. It's 60 percent Indonesian-owned, 40 percent Chinese-owned. But actually, this really wasn't supposed to have been built by China. Japan, with their famous Shinkansen rail system, they were the heavy favourites to win the bid. They said that they'd financed the project at basically zero percent interest, but they did need a guarantee from the Indonesian government that they'd step in with money if anything went wrong. But then China came in with a counter-offer. They said, we're going to build this cheaper, we'll build it quicker, and we don't need any guarantee from the Indonesian government. But they did want 2 percent interest on their loan. Well, Indonesia picked China to many people's surprise. But in the end, this project is three years late, it's two billion dollars over budget, and the interest rate's gone up to 3.4 percent. Oh, and the Indonesian government did have to fork out some money in the end. Seems like some people on board just love the name.

Others are happy that Indonesia are the trailblazers in the region.

It's a good program in Indonesia. It's very good. We're proud of it.

Ticket pricing is controversial. A journey to Bandung costs about US\$20. That's five times more expensive than taking the bus. I also found out, from personal experience, that the train doesn't actually take you to Bandung City Centre. You actually end up in a suburb nearly an hour away. We're in Bandung. It's pretty fast, I've got to say. And to be fair, this isn't the first railway line in the world. That's late or over budget. Countries like Indonesia are hungry for infrastructure, and China can provide that infrastructure. When it goes well, it's a win-win. The problem is that when things don't go according to plan, the risks, political, economic, environmental, they do seem to be a bit one-sided. But that's simply something that Indonesia was willing to accept when it jumped on the BRI train. Our man on the train, Nick Marsh. And finally, one of Italy's most popular romantic singers has been arrested as part of a mafia roundup in Naples. Tony Colombo is known for leading the near melodica pop genre that's really quite big in southern Italy. His latest song, which translates to I'm Waiting For You at the Altar, has had almost 60 million hits on YouTube.

Some classic crooning action there. I think, well, Stephanie Prentiss told me more about the singer. Tony Colombo is a very mainstream singer in Italy, particularly popular in Naples. He sings a lot about love, romantic longing. He's released more than 20 albums and performed around the world, but he's now accused of having ties to the De Laro clan. That's a powerful group within the Camorra mafia in Naples. And investigators are now looking into his investments that could be linked

to it. They say he may have invested in mafia businesses, so seemingly legal and above all brands, that companies have used creating using drug profits. So one is the Corleone clothing line, seemingly a Godfather film reference. They think he might have invested more than \$500,000 in

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that.

As well as an energy drink called nine millimetres. The other main allegation against Tony Colombo is that he received illicit funds and disguised them as profits for his musical career. Now, he also married a woman in 2019, a widow of a mafia boss. He had a wedding with mafia members

attending and she's been arrested too, facing similar allegations. Both of them, however, are denying any involvement in organised crime. Worth noting though, isn't it that this isn't the only mafia crackdown of the year?

Not at all. We've seen a number of high profile and successful raids on mafia clans this year. The Undring Ghetta mafia, they're being cracked down on, they've been a number of arrests, including some of their main players. That is that really powerful group known as being the centre of a global spider web of drug trafficking. More than 50 people arrested last month from that clan and 38 put in prison. And Pascal Bonavote, he ran the group. He was arrested in April after being on the run for around five years. So this latest round of arrests, including of course, Tony Colombo, is in keeping with a wide spread crackdown in Italy. Stephanie Prentice.

And that's all from us for now, but there will be a new edition of the Global News Podcast later. If you want to comment on this one, do drop us an email. The address is globalpodcast.cbc.co.uk. You can also find us on X at Global News Pod. This edition was mixed by Danny Cox, the producer, was Carl Josephs, the editor is Kara Martin, and I'm Gareth Barlow. Until next time, goodbye.