

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Jailed Iranian human rights activist awarded Nobel Peace Prize

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

I'm Nick Miles, and at 13 hours GMT on Friday, the 6th of October, these are our main stories.

The Iranian human rights activist Nadezh Mohamedi has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

We look at the message that sends Tehran.

The UN says Thursday's attack on a Ukrainian cafe, which killed more than 50 people, appeared to be caused by a Russian missile.

Also in this podcast, we've heard about the impact of long COVID, but what about the misery of the long colds?

And new evidence that shows we arrived in the Americas far sooner than previously thought.

We start with the words of the jailed Iranian human rights activist Nadezh Mohamedi.

The more they punish me, the more determined I become to fight until we achieve freedom.

And she has just been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The head of the Norwegian committee in Oslo, Barat Rez Anderson, explained why Nadezh Mohamedi deserved the accolade.

Her brave struggle has come with tremendous personal cost.

All together, the regime has arrested her 13 times, convicted her five times, and sentenced her to a total of 31 years in prison and 154 lashes.

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Ms Mohamedi is still in prison as I speak.

Sivash Adalan from the BBC's Persian service told us more about the way Nadezh Mohamedi has been fighting for human rights.

She has been a fierce advocate of non-violence.

She was the first in Iran to begin an organized campaign against the death penalty.

She formed this group called the gradual abolition of death penalty.

Not only did death penalty not get abolished in Iran, but they threw her in jail because of leading that crusade.

Death penalty is one of the sacred pillars of Sharia law.

That's why the clerical regime did not accept that.

In addition to that, while being a complete full-fledged civil rights activist, she held out a lot of hope for the reform movement as Mawel.

She took part in the elections where the candidates were moderates or reformists until a few years ago.

But then when the reform movement began to falter and people turned their backs on the reformist faction, she as well became a proponent of changing the political system in its entirety, which is her stance today.

And to what extent has she been an inspirational figure for the more recent wave of protests against human rights abuses in Iran?

Well, she was an advocate for also the abolition of mandatory hijab, which is the reason why those protests began last year after Mahsa Amini died at the hands of the morality police.

So while she was in prison, she kept on sending out these statements and communiques in support of the protesters.

Of course, Iran has a very fractious opposition movement, both the diaspora and the opposition movement inside Iran.

They're very polarized.

So some of the more radical elements of the opposition don't like her because they think she's too easy on the government.

The government doesn't like her, but she has been an inspiration from the mainstream opposition movement in Iran.

And Sivash, we heard of the Iranian semi-official news agency FAST condemning this prize, saying the West has awarded her against Iran's national security.

What could happen to her now?

Do you think this could perhaps make her position even harder?

Well, I mean, they couldn't do nothing that they haven't done to her already.

She's been deprived of seeing her kids grow up.

She has two teenage children now, one daughter and a son, both 16.

They live with their father in Paris now.

She's never seen her kids grow up.

She's been in prison almost all her political, during her political career in the past decades.

She's been, as soon as she would come out and would join the protesters or would issue a statement to put her back in prison.

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Just recently, they extended her prison term for another 12 years.

So she's languishing in jail, but even while being in jail,

she is still remaining steadfast and issuing statements, supporting protesters and the protest movement.

So she's remained very much in the headline and continues to be a figure in her own right.

That was Sivash Adalan from the BBC's Persian Service.

It was the deadliest missile strike to hit Ukraine in more than a year.

And according to the country's Interior Ministry, every family in the northeastern village of Roza has been affected by Thursday's attack.

52 people are now known to have been killed, including an eight-year-old boy.

Liz Throssel, the spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, labeled the airstrike deplorable and a horrible loss of human life.

She said that the UN had assigned a field team to investigate.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, who saw for himself the horrific impact of such

strikes is profoundly shocked and condemns these killings.

He's deployed a field team to the site to speak to survivors and gather more information.

Before the Russian invasion, the village's population was about 300.

It's not clear how many residents were still living there,

but it's clear that with the high number of people killed, everybody in this small community has been affected.

Ukraine has blamed Russia for the attack and said that there were no military targets in the area. But in a phone call with reporters, the Kremlin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, had this defiant response.

The Russian military does not attack civilian targets.

Strikes are carried out against military infrastructure facilities,

places of concentration of military personnel and representatives of the military leadership.

So where does this attack leave both Ukraine and Russia in the wider context of the war?

A question for our international editor, Jeremy Bowen, who's in Kiev.

There's been a massive amount of condemnation among Ukraine's allies about what happened in that village, the number of people who were killed, the way that it looks as if

a wake following a funeral seems to have been targeted with those absolutely appalling consequences.

Now, this comes at a difficult time for the Ukrainians because they're summer offensive, which they hoped would bring strategic breakthroughs that would change the war.

That hasn't succeeded in doing that.

It continues, but those breakthroughs haven't come.

And longer term, worrying for the Ukrainians is the fact that cracks have appeared in Western support.

They follow very closely what happens abroad.

People in the government, President Zelensky of Ukraine, has been meeting European leaders in Spain and he is constantly trying to shore up support for his country and its war effort.

Now, there is no prospect of the tap being turned off immediately, nothing like that.

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But Zelensky said at the beginning of the year, this is going to be the year of victory.

Now, it's clear that's not going to happen.

And there is a growing realization on all sides that this is going to be a long war.

Zelensky and the Ukrainian leadership is very conscious that the cracks in support that have been seen in Poland, in Slovakia and in the United States, that all of those things could widen.

So I think that this is a time of decision the next couple of months.

Ukrainians, of course, say they don't have a choice in this.

They have to keep on fighting.

But for their allies, there are decisions to be taken about how they gear up to help support Ukraine in the next phases of this war.

Jeremy Boeing.

Now to Uganda, where earlier this year, so-called courtship rape was made unconstitutional.

For generations in the Karamoja area in the north of the country, many young men had been abducting

and raping girls as young as 13 and keeping them until they consented to marriage.

It's a crime that went unpunished.

And now, despite a recent ban, there are reports it's still widespread.

James Coppnell has been hearing more about this from a lawyer in the region, Christine Akello.

The meaning of courtship rape in the Karamoja context is the act of a boy in company of his peers grabbing a girl whom he may be in a relationship with or not with the intention of having a sexual relationship with her.

A boy comes with his peers, a group, and they'll grab the girl.

The boy's teammates may help him to access the girl by holding her down.

And the boy who has interest in the girl accesses her and has a sexual intercourse with her.

This happens even by elderly men, but the victims often are young girls.

Young girls of maybe 13, 14, at least below 18 years.

And what happens to these girls and women afterwards?

You may be forced to stay with the perpetrator.

The person who raped you because of the shame that someone has had sexual intercourse with you.

And now this person, if it goes ahead and pays the dowry for you,

the relationship is converted into a marriage.

In the other alternative, you can actually run away from, even maybe run away from the district.

It is practiced in all the nine districts which constitute the Karamoja region.

So it is that wide.

What does Ugandan law have to say about this?

Now, the Ugandan law condemns the act.

We have other laws.

For example, we have the Pinochon Act, which is used to criminalize the acts of courtship rape.

However, despite the presence of those laws, it is still going on in some areas actually unabated.

So this must be something that is terrifying for parents, for young women?

Actually, growing up of a young girl in the Karamoja context, deep in the rural setting, is terrifying because it is very obvious you are likely to be a victim of this.

By the time you reach 13, 14, it is very likely that your parents are looking at you as, you know,

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a potential for a relationship and how that relationship ends most often is through courtship rape. The girls almost have no choice but to go through it.

That was the lawyer Christine Akelo, who's in the Karamoja region of Uganda.

Now, feeling down about having a virus is not just in your imagination and is a recognized thing.

That is the advice today from scientists in the UK who have been researching long colds.

Just as with long COVID, people who have had a cold are experiencing prolonged symptoms often. A study of more than 10,000 adults showed that some of these can include symptoms like a cough, stomach pain and diarrhea.

Our health correspondent Michelle Roberts told me more.

The idea is not brand new. Experts have known for a while that after a viral infection, although most people recover, some people say that they still experience some symptoms after, even if their initial illness wasn't that bad. Sometimes they can have these enduring symptoms. And we've heard more about it, obviously, with COVID recently, because in the pandemic, so many of us have caught COVID. And then we've had this thing that's now been called long COVID, which is enduring symptoms afterwards.

So this study was actually looking at adults doing a survey during early on in the pandemic before the jabs had been rolled out. So nobody had been vaccinated in this group of people. They were looking at the 10,000 and they were asking them about any symptoms that they had over a couple of months. And within that group, there were just over a thousand of them said that they'd had COVID recently. And then some others, about 500, said they'd had some sort of respiratory illness, but it wasn't COVID. And then when they started asking, well, have you had any persistent symptoms, they did find that in both of those respiratory virus groups, they did have some of them. So they're saying it's important to recognize that you can get something a bit like long COVID, you can get a long cold is what they're calling it.

And what are the symptoms of it? Are they similar to the symptoms of long COVID? And what are they?

So there were similarities and some differences too. So with the long cold, it was things like a cough, upset stomach or a bit of diarrhea. Whereas with the long COVID, the thing that seemed to be a bit different with that was sometimes there was the kind of brain fog that we've heard about before, and also some loss of smell and taste, some of the more classic COVID symptoms. But there was some overlap between the two. That was Michelle Roberts. A set of footprints have unlocked the secrets of when early humans reached North America. The prints were found in New Mexico and scientists

say they're 23,000 years old. And that means our distant ancestors were happily coexisting with the wildlife there for far longer than we used to think. Claudia Cockrell reports.

The last Ice Age ended about 12,000 years ago, and with it went animals like the woolly mammoth, the ground sloth and the saber-toothed tiger. It's long been thought that humans had arrived in North America around this time and may have hunted the animals to extinction. But in 2021, scientists discovered fossilized footprints at the White Sands National Park in New Mexico.

They worked out how old the footprints were by dating some seeds which were embedded in the same layer of earth. And their age suggested that humans could have reached North America up to 10,000 years earlier than we thought. Now, new research has been published in the academic journal Science, which backs up the original findings. Sally Reynolds is a professor

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of paleoecology, who was part of the research team. We did think that humans couldn't possibly have made it into North America prior to about 16,000 years because there were these massive ice sheets in the way. Either we migrated earlier, perhaps the ice sheets weren't the great barrier that we have been thinking that they were, or, excitingly, that there were probably multiple routes that were used by early humans to make it into the region. And that's exciting.

If the findings are correct, then it means that humans and Ice Age animals lived on the same land for many thousands of years longer.

We thought humans must have made a devastating initial impact in the ecosystems into which they emerged, they moved, because as soon as the humans appeared, large animals started dying left, right and centre. The work at White Sands extends the period that we were living with the megafauna, and it's clear they were not as initially devastating as we had first supposed. That was Claudia Cockrell.

Coming up in this podcast. The idea is that they smell, they feel, they touch in the virtual world, those objects, but also to have all the information that today we don't have.

We take you inside the first virtual museum of stolen objects.

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20,000 children displaced every day over a six-year period because of extreme weather events.

That is the shocking headline of a new report by the United Nations Children's Agency, UNICEF.

Faraina Knaus is from UNICEF. And she's been telling my colleague,

Davina Gupta, more about the findings. I think it's important that we don't forget

that this is still a very conservative estimate. The real numbers may actually be a lot higher because the data that exists is incomplete. In particular, children that are forced from their homes in a situation of drought are often not captured. And in many countries, the systems in place to record children displaced are not very strong.

But what does it look like being displaced? I think it's important to see that

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they're very different situations. So children get displaced and forced from the homes in the face of an immediate disaster. Imagine and think of a storm, a cyclone, a typhoon. And in many countries like the Philippines or India that have invested in early warning systems and in strong disaster risk reduction management capacities, many of these children are being evacuated. So lives are saved, but still sometimes and too often communities still get wrecked by these storms, a return to their home or their community is often taking months or sometimes not possible. But then there are other countries like South Sudan, for example, where floods have been displacing around 12% of the child population over the last six years. And where early warning evacuations, disaster risk management or a return to a life back in their community is simply often just out of reach and impossible. So it's important to remember that these realities are very different. Being displaced in the face of a disaster depends on where you are and how vulnerable you are. And we're talking about the next generation, the future of the human race in these countries as well. And we're talking about the large chunk of children being displaced from these countries that you've mentioned. Do you think the world is doing enough and listening? I don't think the world is doing enough because if we're leaving countries like South Sudan and children in communities in Somalia to face these extreme weather events without support, we are clearly not doing enough. So the question is what is it that we can and must do urgently? It is really important and that is why UNICEF wanted to shine a light on these children, on this growing number of children that are being displaced in a context of a fast changing climate. We need to direct our efforts and attention to invest in early warning systems in the most at risk communities, in capacities of countries and communities to recover and rebuild. We need to design and invest in schools and health facilities that can withstand these kind of shocks, typhoons, cyclones, floods, they are accelerating, they're becoming more intense, they're becoming more frequent and they will be affecting a growing number of children. So the investments are really critical if we want to save lives and we want to protect the future children that are yet to be driven from the homes by these extreme weather events in the future.

Thorena Kanaus from UNICEF. A long extinct supervolcano in the western scrublands of the United States is at the heart of an increasingly contentious debate about the benefits and costs of switching to electric vehicles. Forty kilometers from the Nevada-Oregon border, geologists found one of the world's largest deposits of lithium, a key element in electric battery production. In the push towards a greener, cleaner economy, many countries have committed to moving from petrol to electric cars, but that depends on a big increase in mining for the metal which causes local environmental damage, often in contested lands. Our technology reporter James Clayton went to visit the mine and speak to tribe members who've long opposed it. The Pashoshoni, Paiute, Bannock people were escaping the U.S. cavalry attacks from this area kind of past Sentinel Rock here and the U.S. cavalry chased the people into this area right here where the mine is being dug up at the moment and they were massacred. It's a tragedy, it should be deemed a historical site, that should stop the mining altogether. Unfortunately, the corporations didn't hear that. Nevada has only been a state for 160 years. It's been inhabited by the relatives of these people long before. They travel here every year to remember their ancestors, but they say were murdered at this spot. This year though, the tone is even more somber. In the distance,

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the rumble of heavy machinery. Beneath the sagebrush here could be one of the biggest lithium deposits in the world. This is Thacker Pass and in March work began on getting it out of the ground. But this mine is different mainly because many of its supporters claim to be environmentalists and say that the mine could play at least some role in tackling climate change. Global leaders across the world have committed to electric vehicles which lithium is essential for. This is Tim Crowley, a representative of Lithium Americas who owns this mine. Lithium is essential. It is the key component to getting high energy storage batteries into our market. Right now, we're completely dependent on fossil fuels for the energy we utilize every day. But there are environmentalists who believe the answer to tackling climate change isn't yet more mines. John Hada heads up a local environmental charity. A mining operation is in fact very damaging to the environment and we've got to be very careful how we permit these things because this is their ancestral land. It's being taken from them yet again. Opponents to this mine think that this is just the beginning, that this whole area will become one massive mining district and when you ask Lithium Americas, it's pretty clear that that's exactly what they want. I know that there are concerns that this whole area which is stunningly beautiful might end up becoming a mining district. If the United States is going to be self-sufficient, there has to be more. There has to be more developments. The people at this protest are already looking at how they can strategize to protest against other mines planned in the area. Basically, this one patch in the middle, that's the only place not claimed right now and that's really scary.

But it looks like mining in the name of saving the planet may only be just beginning.

James Clayton, our technology reporter. A group of politicians and privacy campaigners in Britain have caught on an immediate end to the use of live facial recognition for public surveillance. They've signed a statement with tech experts and campaign groups to raise concerns about the police and private companies deploying the cameras, which have now been outlawed in the European Union. Here's our technology editor, Zoe Kleimer.

The Home Office has stated that it wants to explore the further use of live facial recognition technology in the UK to help fight crime. It involves scanning the public with cameras and using artificial intelligence to compare the images of the faces captured with those on a watch list. The Metropolitan Police says it's deployed the tech six times this year, including at the King's Coronation. And private companies such as FaceWatch offer a scheme for shops, alerting them to the presence of potential shoplifters identified by other local stores. But today's statement by the MPs and campaigners warns there's little evidence that the tech is effective and argues there's no sufficient legal basis for its use. They also highlight human rights concerns. Zoe Kleimer. Now, how do you make a museum of stolen cultural artifacts? Well, the United Nations cultural body UNESCO says it's come up with an answer. It is planning to make the

world's first virtual museum of stolen objects, which it's developed with the International Police Organization Interpol. I heard more from Ernesto Atone, Assistant Director General at UNESCO.

We are not building a museum, a traditional museum that you can see in every city around the world.

What we are doing is a virtual conception of a museum. And that's why the form is a tree with branches with roots. And in the world that is somehow the continent that contain all these

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elements is to walk through these ramps all around by region entering two countries where they will see these objects in three-dimension or in virtual dimension with all the story that is behind. Not only where it was stolen from, what museum or the archaeological site, but also from which community, what it means, what is the history beyond the construction of this object artifact. So Ernesto, people are going to be able to see these objects in three dimensions on their screens. Yes, the idea is that they smell, they feel, they touch in the virtual world those objects, but also to have all the information that today we don't have. So we have to work a lot with our member states to recreate the history where they come from. It will be a museum and that's important to understand that goes in the contrary line of what a museum is. So it will not be to expand its collection, but at the end what we want is to gradually empty the museum. And it will mean that all objects that have been stolen have been recovered. That was Ernesto Atoni, assistant director general at UNESCO. Finally, two singers, the Icelandic star Björk and Spain's Rosalia, have joined forces with a new song that highlights what they believe are the dangers of industrial fish farming. This report from Wendierke.

Björk has campaigned on many environmental issues before. She's a longtime supporter of the activist

Greta Thunberg and she set up a foundation in 2008 to protect the natural environment of Iceland.

Now she's focusing on industrial fish farming and that's because last year the country's two biggest fisheries merged. As a result of that, Ice Fish Farm now controls four fjords in the country and aims to process 10 million salmon each year. Björk has publicly questioned the conditions that the salmon are being kept in and she's called for much tighter regulations on fish farming. The singer also claims that salmon are escaping from the fish farms, breeding with the wild salmon and changing the DNA, which she says could eventually wipe out the wild salmon that Iceland is famous for. Ice Fish Farm insists its only goal is to deliver high quality salmon while respecting nature. That's a preview of the new song. It's the first time Björk and Rosalia have collaborated and it's the Icelandic singer's first release since her 2022 album which heralded the beauty, traditions and nature of Iceland.

The song has yet to be named but it will be released sometime this month and both singers have vowed to use the profits to bolster the fight against industrial fish farming in Iceland. And that's all from us for now but before we go here's Jackie with news of the next happy pod.

Yes in the next edition we will be celebrating the extraordinary comeback of US gymnastics rock star. Yes I said rock star Simone Biles. After two years out of the sport she is back and she is doing astonishing things. We'll be hearing about how the New Zealand man who learnt to read in his 50s so he could tell his grandkids stories and who has now written his own book. We'll hear from the winners of this year's Nobel Prize for medicine on the joys of science and speaking of science the how and why of a cat's purr. All in the next happy pod available from Saturday October the 7th. 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 globalpodcastatbbc.co.uk. You can also find us on X formally known as Twitter at Global News Pod. This edition was mixed by Charlotte Tazymaska and the producer was Tracy Gordon. The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Nick Martha and until next time goodbye.

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