

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Morocco earthquake death toll rises

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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 Monday the 11th of September. These are our main stories. Rescue teams in Morocco continue to search for survivors of last Friday's earthquake with the death toll now standing at two and a half thousand. The United States and Vietnam have issued a joint statement warning against the threat or use of force in the disputed South China Sea. And China vehemently denies reports that a parliamentary researcher in London has been spying for Beijing.

Also in this podcast.

We hear from residents caught up in warfare in Sudan's capital Khartoum. And we have reaction to Novak Djokovic's US Open trial.

The toll from the Moroccan earthquake continues to rise. The government there now says almost two and a half thousand people are confirmed to have died. Many of the worst hit villages are yet to be reached. So that figure is certain to rise further.

With heavy machinery unable to get through blocked roads, villagers have been using their bare hands to search under the rubble. People are still being pulled out alive. But our correspondent Tom Bateman, who's reached one of the worst hit areas of the Atlas Mountains, says time is running out to find more survivors. He sent this report from close to the epicentre of the quake.

Dawn lights up the destruction in the village of Mule Brahim. Morocco's most remote hillsides have become encampments of the survivors. Hakima has lost contact with her son, who fled the village, she says, to get help. She was already grieving. Her husband had been sick and died before the quake came.

We are staying in the streets. I feel bad for my son. His dad passed away and I have to take care of him, says Hakima.

People are here to help each other. The village's mosque, still standing, becomes a makeshift refuge. But in the morning we spent here, there were no signs of any official aid response. Hussein survived when his son freed him from the wreckage of their home. But his wife, Fatna, was killed.

My wife, she stayed in the house. The ceiling came down and struck her. This comes from God. But thankfully, my son is safe, Hussein tells me.

This is where homes once stood. Now people walk through a cascade of ruins. Recovery attempts across this remote region have been painfully slow.

So far this clear up is people having to do it by themselves. One of their neighbours at the top of the street here, the house was struck. A family of six was inside and five of them have been killed. Only the father has survived. But it feels like people barely even have time to grieve. You can see the humanitarian challenge that now remains.

In another village, locals pull a body from the rubble. Spanish rescuers are on the ground there too, saying the destruction is absolute. Meanwhile, British rescue gear has arrived with a team of 60 specialists deployed from the UK.

People are retrieving what they can from homes to damage to living. Morocco's survivors are now on the land with all they have left.

To Vietnam now, where 50 years ago, America was still at war with the communists in Hanoi. This weekend saw the culmination of a long rapprochement between the US and Vietnam. He added his thoughts on this on Monday, speaking after a major aviation deal with Vietnam Airlines and the US firm Boeing, worth almost \$8 billion.

Our partnership is about so much more than innovation and investments. It's about people. It's about creating a free and open Indo-Pacific for all people, for all people.

On the last day of Mr Biden's trip, the visit took on a more political tone as he and the Vietnamese leader Nguyen Phu Trang made a joint statement warning against the threat or use of force in the disputed South China Sea. Last week, China's Coast Guard was accused of illegally interfering with supply boats from the Philippines. Our correspondent Laura Baker, who's in Vietnam, told me more.

Quite surprising from Hanoi, who appears to be taking a strong stance on this and standing up to Beijing on this. If you look at the communique, it's actually in part of the joint leader's statement that was issued to us. I think it's worth mentioning, it's the only time China is mentioned in the whole document. But it does say, and both leaders have signed their names to it, that competing claims on the waterway must be settled under international norms. Now, they say the leaders underscored their unwavering support for the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law. And here comes the key bit, without the threat or use of force. Now, just last week, state media here in Vietnam reported that a fishing vessel, a Vietnamese fishing vessel, had been water cannon by the Chinese Coast Guard. The latest in what Vietnam claims are a number of rising tensions in what they claim in the South China Sea. China claims quite a large swathe of the waterway, despite an international tribunal saying otherwise. Vietnam says that China is building on islands, that they also have claims to. There are various back and forth between Hanoi and Beijing on this. And obviously in this statement, they've decided to take a stand with Washington by their side. I think it's unlikely that Hanoi will raise their voice to China on anything else. And when it comes to kind of smoothing out the way for this visit, they have had several meetings with Chinese officials over the last few weeks.

Laura, over the weekend, President Biden was saying, I think we think too much in terms of Cold War terms. It's not about being opposed to Beijing. It's about generating economic growth and stability for everybody. But Beijing's got to follow the rules. How do you think Beijing will react to what's been said over the last day?

Well, I think it will be interesting to see how they do react, because over the last few months, they have accused the Biden administration of having a Cold War mentality. And that is what I put to the president in his press conference last night here in Hanoi. I asked him what his response to that would be. And that was his answer. He said, we think too much in Cold War mentality. But from Beijing's point of view, it has watched the United States steadily increase its presence across the Asia Pacific over the last year. We've seen Japan and South Korea brought into the same room, something we never thought would ever happen. And then they've had a deal where the Philippines have offered the United States the use of four more bases. The US has also done deals in the Pacific Islands. And now here they are in Beijing's backyard, signing the highest level of agreement that Hanoi offers. And obviously they're doing much more business. You just heard there about a Boeing contract. There's going to be contracts on semiconductors also. So I think when it comes to that, Beijing

will be watching closely. One analyst I did speak to said that Beijing seems to have been taken by surprise by how fast the United States has moved into the Asia Pacific region. And perhaps Beijing's reaction will be to that.

That was Laura Bicker. Well, we've also been following Beijing's reaction to allegations that a parliamentary researcher in London has been spying for China. The man accused has released a statement through his lawyers saying that he's completely innocent of these claims and had spent his career highlighting what he called the threats presented by the Chinese Communist Party. Mao Ning is a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry. The so-called Chinese espionage activities against the UK are purely groundless. China resolutely opposes this. We urge the UK side to stop spreading false information and stop its political manipulation and malicious framing of China.

Your senior MPs from the governing Conservative Party in the UK have called for China to be categorised as a threat to British interests. Well, the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, has so far declined to take that step, but he raised concerns about interference from Beijing with China's premier at the recent G20 summit in India. So does the UK consider China a threat? Here's the business secretary, Kemi Bednock, speaking to my colleague Justin Webb. China is an epoch-defining challenge for us as well as many of the other countries in the world. But you don't define it as a threat. Why not?

I think that we have to be very careful with the language that we use and what we do is have those conversations with China directly. I can't comment on the specifics of this investigation, but the Prime Minister spoke to the Chinese Premier at the weekend about this, setting out our very strong concerns about interference in Parliament. And I think that that's the key thing that this should be noted. Whether or not you use words like threat, I think, is a reflection of how far you want to escalate things. China is the second largest economy in the world, is heavily integrated in our economy, as it is with many of our allies like America, Canada and Australia. And we're taking the same approach that those countries are taking. I asked our political correspondent Ian Watson about the alleged spy's response to the accusations. The person at the centre of these allegations, the parliamentary researcher, has denied them. In fact, he's said that he's spent his time, in a statement via his lawyer, he's spent his time trying to expose the Chinese Communist Party. And indeed, he was working very closely with some of the members of Parliament who have been most critical of China, including Tom Tugendhat, when he chaired the cross-party committee on foreign affairs. He's now, of course, a government minister. So I guess the allegation is that he was getting close to some of China's critics on behalf of Beijing. He's saying, in fact, actually, he was genuinely working with these people because he, too, is critical. He said he's spent his career to date trying to educate others about the challenges and threats presented by the Chinese Communist Party.

And Ian, this issue of whether or not to categorise China as a threat to British interest at the moment, to Rishi Sunak, as we were saying, is low to go that far. What would it take, do you think, for that to happen, though?

I think you'd probably need more evidence of China's activities. Although there's been plenty of concern over the years, you know, about the Huawei contracts, for example. We know about allegations of industrial espionage. We know about accusations of cybercrimes. There's been a whole range of concerns which have been out there. But I think people are worried

about whether the activities stretch into the heart of government. So this development, I think, has given fuel to the fire of those who are saying that more action should be taken towards China and more scepticism expressed towards China. That said, Rishi Sunak's own position was that he'd rather be in the room raising concerns than, if you like, boycotting relations with China. So it doesn't look like he'll go down that road. And interestingly, the trade minister, Kemi Badenoch, as well, pointing out the economic value of the relationship with China. So I think the position in government, irrespective of this development, is that there should be criticism, but also engagement with Beijing.

Ian Watson. It is five months since the conflict began in Sudan. And according to the United Nations, thousands of people have been killed, and around 5 million people displaced because of fighting between government forces and a militia group. On Sunday, saw the deadliest single act of violence since the war began, when airstrikes hit a market in the south of the capital, Khartoum, killing close to 50 people. So what is life like now for many people across Sudan? Ahmed, who lives in Khartoum, sent us his audio diary.

This is Ahmed from Sudan. In a few days for the world, the war in Sudan will complete five months. For me and my family, it's like five years. Last Sunday, an intense clash has erupted two meters in front of our main door between the Sudanese armed forces and the paramilitary rapid support forces. I was left with the only option of sending my family and dozens of relatives that were staying at our house to a mosque and a public school to serve their lives from the clashes. It was the toughest decision I ever made in my life. All of a sudden, we found ourselves in the middle of a war in a place that considered to be one of the safest in the capital. I had only a few seconds to take the right decision whether they should leave in the middle of the clashes or stay home and be subjected to a risk of artillery shelling by one of the warring sides. My mom, kids and wife were lucky to meet a friend on the way to the mosque who insisted on taking them home and shelter for that night. Now, my family is scattered at four different locations because none of the sites is big enough to accommodate all of them. I had to leave home myself a few days after the family left that night because the paramilitary rapid support forces shelled our house with a mortar while I was inside and partially damaged the building. My mom's calls and pressure from the relatives forced me to leave in tears. Leaving your home is one of the worst experiences of war because the chances are very high that you might not be able to return. I am currently splitting myself at four locations, the mornings between friends in walkable neighborhoods when the situation is quiet. For the nights I sleep over at any house that has electricity and running water. The nights for me are mainly for thinking where I should go to the next morning. The war in Sudan is taking the country to complete darkness. The destruction is beyond imagination. This country is absolutely turning into complete anarchy. Few days before we became an IDPs we were thinking at a dinner of post-war phase. My mom said she would slaughter a sheep as a farewell for the relatives staying at a house that have expressed interest to return. I had plans to plant trees and open free English language and Arabic class for the children including my own but the destiny took us to an opposite direction from settled people to IDPs. However I am still very grateful to God because my entire family is okay. I continuously tried to convince myself silently that these tough days will end soon and we would be able to return to the home I was born at and slaughter a sheep as well as planting the trees. When I see the news and reinforcements

by both sides I lose hope but I have to be strong. This is not the time to give up. It is time to fight for the family and for my unplanted trees.

That was Ahmed on Surviving Sudan's War. Still to come. It just basically says to you when you are thin, when you are skinny this is what we like and this is what is going to make you successful. We have first hand about bullying and body shaming at the top of British ballet. Unexpected Elements is all about finding the surprising science angles to everyday news. I love that this show has the scope to discuss both emergent AI, nuclear in Ghana and also what those stringy bits are on a banana. And joining the dots between their global connections. Nature does pack a lot of surprises for us. An invisibility cloak in the acoustic domain. So call that's Unexpected Elements from the BBC World Service. Find it wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

Daniel Khalif, the terror suspect who sparked a manhunt in the UK last week, has appeared in court charged with escaping from prison. The hearing heard that Mr Khalif, a former soldier in the British Army, allegedly escaped by tying himself under a food delivery lorry with a strap made from bed sheets. He was being kept at Wandsworth prison in London. Our reporter Anna Foster was at Westminster Magistrates Court in central London for the hearing.

He was in that blue police van which is generally only used for terror suspects. It's one of the high security vehicles that the police use. You could see also the sirens of the unmarked police vehicles and notably as well the entrance, the vehicle entrance into the court was flanked with police officers as he was driven in this morning. He appeared in court number one again flanked by two police officers. He was wearing a grey tracksuit, sat quietly in the dock. He spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth. Now there was legal discussion about the charge, the new charge which he is facing because of course he was already on remand at Wandsworth prison accused of terrorism offences and offences under the Official Secrets Act which he denies. He is now further charged with escaping from prison, escaping from lawful custody. The allegation is that he was working in the prison kitchen and he managed to smuggle himself out underneath a food truck. That is now the subject of a police investigation. But there was no indication of plea at this stage during this very short hearing which only lasted about eight minutes or so. He was of course denied bail. There was no application for bail. So he will go back to prison. His next court appearance will be at the end of the month in front of the central criminal court.

That was Anna Foster. Ballet places a huge strain on dancers training to become professionals. The physical and mental challenges are immense and here in Britain some of the country's elite ballet schools are facing accusations of bullying and body shaming from former students. The BBC has spoken to a number of them who say that they have all suffered eating disorders and depression after attending the schools as children. Haley Hassell reports.

These teenage dancers have big dreams. Most of the pupils in this lesson are around 16 and many have been dancing since they were three or four years old. Ballet training is hard. You have to be tough to make it as a professional. I know about this world because I was once part of it. As a child I wanted to be a ballerina until a knee injury ended my dancing days and I became a journalist instead. I have a lot of happy memories of performances, costumes and the friends that I made but not everyone in this intense high pressured world can say the same. He literally just went out of his way to just break me

into little teeny tiny pieces and then didn't really do very much to build me up. For the BBC's File on 4 programme I've spoken to over 20 dancers who've told me that they think they've been body shamed and bullied at school. Ellen joined the Royal Ballet School at 16. Just two weeks later she claims one of the teachers took her aside. She used her kind of hand, she cut my bum off and then cut basically the whole back of my leg off all the way down to my heel and just said if I had a knife this is what I'd cut off. Ellen tells me the alleged comment made her concerned about what she ate. Later she was surprised at the clash reaction when she returned to school after being unwell. I came back into the studio I felt awful and I had lost weight because I hadn't been very well. The whole class clapped me. It just basically says to you when you're thin, when you're skinny this is what we like and this is what's going to make you successful. The Royal Ballet School say that the applause might have been to welcome her back. Ellen did become a successful ballerina. She says she developed an eating disorder which lasted 15 years. Terry Hyde is a former ballet dancer and now a psychologist who now counsels dancers from all over the world. He says the majority of those he speaks to tell him they have issues with food. It's those in power, those in a position of trust that then create the issue of a body needs to be thin and then the dancers mostly the female dancers will have this idea I need to look thin therefore I need to restrict in what I eat I need to be careful what I eat then it goes beyond that to eating disorders and body dysmorphia. Ellen has now begun legal action against the Royal Ballet School. Dino Nocchivelli from Lee Day Solicitors is representing. These women were entitled to a duty of care. Their parents were paying for them to receive this education by professionals which was a care for them that progressed their careers. People within the ballet companies might say that they pushed these students to make them better ballerinas. What do you say to that? We do not see how any ballet school can say that these acts were implemented for your benefit. They clearly caused distress. The Royal Ballet School says previous allegations have been investigated and resolved and do not align with their records. The school says it's ready to investigate any new claims and continuously improves to protect its students health and welfare. Throughout this investigation the BBC spoke to over 50 dancers across four different dance schools many of whom say that this culture goes beyond just a handful of schools. Five, six, rising up on the end, seven, eight. Hailey Hassel reporting. Now for a bit of trivia. Which country has the fastest growing economy in the world? Well if you said Guyana then you'd be correct. The small South American nation grew by 62% last year. That's according to the International Monetary Fund. The growth has come from newly found oil and gas reserves. But Guyana's president Ifan Ali says his country is facing a race against time to capitalize on their oil wealth before global climate commitments come into action. The BBC's Gideon Long has been speaking to him. The country at this moment is in transformation gear. It's a lot of energy, a lot of infrastructure work, a lot of investment in education, in health, in housing, a number of hotels being constructed, apartment buildings, apartment complexes. And the construction sector is the prime beneficiary as a spin-off of what is happening in the oil and gas sector. What are your plans and particularly what are your plans in terms of OPEC? I read that there's been a discussion about whether Guyana might join OPEC. Well at this moment our decision is very clear on this. We are not in any rush or any hurry to join OPEC. It is not part of our

policy. So we are very clear on that. Okay. Those big oil deposits, they were discovered before you came to power and some critics have said that the previous government, when they signed those contracts with Exxon and its partners, they were too generous. They gave away Guyana's oil riches too cheaply. How true is that? Well, I would say definitely we did not have the best of deals. Exxon had a good deal. But look, the sanctity of contract is very important and we can't go back at that. So there'll be no renegotiating of those contracts?

We cannot go back and renegotiate. But what we have done is to ensure that there are changes. We've already outlined a number of changes in future production sharing agreements. It will be completely different. We have to ensure that there is great transparency and accountability in the management of the resources, using the resources as handouts in a way that is popular in the short term. But in the long term, it is detrimental for the countries, not the route that we're going to go. Has your government taken measures to ensure accountability and transparency?

Yes. So that is what I'll explain. So first of all, we have set up the natural resources fund. That fund is governed separate and apart from the executive. Secondly, we have set in the law a condition that if the Minister of Finance does not declare the revenue that has been paid into the fund within a stipulated time from receiving that revenue, he can face up to 10 years in prison. That is in the law. All the resources that is used from the fund to be invested in the country has to pass through the parliamentary system and get parliamentary approval.

Are you worried that Guyana simply doesn't have enough people to really take advantage of this bonanza that you've been given by oil and gas? I mean, just to explain for listeners who don't necessarily know Guyana, it's a country around the size of the United Kingdom. And yet it has a population of less than one million people.

Definitely, our population is going to be a hindrance to development. We're already in a situation in the country where we have a tremendous shortage in the supply of labor. The companies in the private sector complaining now even government contractors are having great difficulties in sourcing labor. So what are we doing? So we have launched a scholarship program through which every Guyanese can have access to higher levels of education.

So you'll be training Guyanese workers. Will you also be importing foreign workers?

Oh, definitely. We are seeing already tremendous requests for the importation of labor to fill the gap that exists. There's an irony here, isn't there, that Guyana has found all of this oil and gas in its water just as the world is moving away from oil. As I speak to you, 53% of the world energy mix comes from oil and gas. But if we are to achieve the full commitment, you're looking at 35 to 40% of world energy mix still coming from oil and gas. So I don't see an immediate medium term end to oil and gas. That was Guyana's president Irfan Ali.

Finally, tennis and Novak Djokovic has moved one step closer to being legitimately called the greatest player of all time. The Serbian won the US Open in New York to secure his 24th Grand Slam title, beating Russia's Danilo Medvedev in straight sets after a nail-biting time break in the second. The 36-year-old now stands at the top of the record list, tying Margaret Court for the most Grand Slam's titles ever. With more, here's the BBC's tennis correspondent Russell Fuller. He lay down at one moment on the court in the middle of a game, just to try and fill his lungs with air. He looks shattered. I think he genuinely was very, very tired. He was trying to keep the points as short as he possibly could. He was regularly stretching his leg muscles in between points, but yet he still managed to win it,

saved a set point, won it in a tie break. And at that moment, you could just see, mentally, it was going to be incredibly difficult for Danilo Medvedev to come back. And in contrast to the second set, Djokovic won the first set relatively easy by six games to three. He played a brilliant first set, serving and volleying quite a lot, taking advantage of the fact that Medvedev likes to return, serve about eight or nine metres behind the baseline. So an extraordinary strategic performance by Djokovic. And to have the endurance at the age of 36 to win the second set in the way he did and complete victory in straight sets is just another remarkable achievement. Do you think Medvedev will be slightly disappointed in how he played in the first set in particular? He started very, very slowly. He played a lot, lot better in that second set. And clearly, it could have gone either way. He's a stubborn man and he admits he can be a stubborn man. This position he takes that I was describing, it really is a long, long way behind the baseline. It does make it easier for somebody, your opponent to come forward and dominate the court. But he's had a lot of success from that position as Rafael Nadal has done over the years, because he does have a powerful and a deep return. But even Medvedev admitted later that perhaps he was a little bit stubborn and he should have tried to move a little bit closer to the baseline to put pressure on Djokovic. Medvedev didn't play nearly as well as he did in the semi-final against Carlos Alcaraz, where he was just outstanding. And of course, a lot of that does have a lot to do with the opponent. That was Russell Fuller speaking to Rick Edwards. And that is all from us for now, but there will be a new version 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 X, formerly known as Twitter, at Global News Pod. This edition was mixed by Pat Sissons and the producer was Jacob Evans. The editor is Karen Martin. I'm Nick Mars and until next time, goodbye.