

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Netanyahu: Israel preparing for Gaza ground invasion

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You're listening to the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

Hello, I'm Oliver Conway. This edition is published in the early hours of Thursday, the 26th of October. The Israeli Prime Minister says Israel is still preparing to invade Gaza despite calls for restraint. I want to be clear about the timing of the offensive.

It will be determined unanimously by the war cabinet. We are working to ensure the best conditions for our fighters in the coming operation. The UN boss says his recent comments about the Hamas attack not happening in a vacuum were misinterpreted.

I spoke of the grievances of the Palestinian people. I also clearly stated that the grievances of the Palestinian people cannot justify the appalling attacks by Hamas.

We hear from Israel.

Also in the podcast, after three weeks of paralysis, Republicans in the U.S. Congress finally elect a new House Speaker, Trump supporter Mike Johnson. And are Gen Z the most prudish ever?

Israel's powerful military has reportedly been ready to launch an invasion of Gaza for at least 10 days, but the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has yet to give the order to go in.

On Wednesday evening, the Israeli leader again insisted troops were preparing for a ground offensive,

but he didn't give any details other than saying the timing would be reached by consensus.

I want to be clear about the timing of the offensive. It will be determined unanimously by the war cabinet, together with Benny Gantz, the chief of staff. We are working to ensure the best conditions for our fighters in the coming operation. We are determined that Hamas and ISIS pay the full price for carrying out their horrific atrocities.

Israel has come under pressure to rethink its invasion plans, with the French president saying it would be an error to launch a, quote, massive ground incursion, and the U.S. reportedly calling for delay. In his televised address, Mr. Netanyahu said Israel had already killed, quote, thousands of terrorists. But it's clear that many Palestinian civilians have died in the airstrikes, including some who had followed Israeli orders to evacuate to southern Gaza.

Among those killed were the family of the Al Jazeera Gaza correspondent, Wael Dadoo, who was pictured holding the body of a baby.

The BBC correspondent, Rushdie Abu-Aluf, who's currently in southern Gaza at the Nasser Hospital, gave my colleague Evan Davis an update of the situation there.

People are struggling to find water, yes. People are struggling to find food. I saw people trying to find food in the garbage. Small kids are coming to our BBC here, operation and begging for water. I saw very long queues on the bakeries and on the supermarkets. Most of the supermarkets

shelves are empty, but I don't think we are starving. But for how long this small place, very overcrowded, can live without any humanitarian corridor? For how long they will hold? Not sure

about it. Rushdie, am I hearing a buzzing over you? Is that a drone? Is that a constant presence? What is that? Yeah, very annoying, buzzing.

Right, that's not a drone. I don't know. Are you okay? You're ducking. I can actually see you, Rushdie,

because we have a skyplane open. I think it's an airstrike somewhere around the place, yeah. How often does that happen, Rushdie? I mean, is that a shocking sound to you now, or is that familiar sound? Not really. This is maybe the fifth or sixth time today. Every day there is bombing around this location. The hospital is in central Khaynounis, and Khaynounis is the second largest city, and it's been hit hard in the last couple of days. Tens of airstrikes across the Khaynounis area, which housing like 400,000 people, original residents, and about 600,000 more. So about million people, about half of the population, they live in this place, and they live with this sound of drone buzzing day and night, and with the airstrikes. The mood here is very angry mood in Gaza. People are squeezed into the corner with no option. People are trying to secure any sort of food or water for their kids to survive. Of course, Israel is targeting Hamas, but always the human cost of this conflict is huge. More than half of those killed are women and children. The BBC correspondent in Gaza, Rushdie Abu Alouf, talking to Evan Davis. William Schomburg,

head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Gaza, has spoken to the BBC for the first time since the deadly Hamas attack of the 7th of October. This is what he told NewsHour's Julian Marshall. Well, the humanitarian conditions right now in Gaza are quite dire, frankly. I was able to visit a couple of hospitals in recent days, overcrowding patients in the corridors, and hospitals have now also been turned into makeshift camps for displaced persons who fear that they are not safe anywhere else, apart from in the hospitals.

And where does the International Committee of the Red Cross come into all of this?

The ICRC has operated in Gaza for several decades. Right now, our focus is on trying to ensure the safe and continued flow of humanitarian assistance and personnel that's required for us to meet needs of communities that have been impacted by the hostilities. We finally will be able to have trucks and some staff entering shortly into Gaza. This is our latest understanding. It has been challenging. And of course, the initial assistance that we will be able to bring into the Gaza Strip is a drop in the ocean of what is required. That is certain.

Could I ask about your staff and the kind of conditions that they're having to work under?

I know that UNRWA have lost several dozen staff as a result of the Israeli airstrikes.

Are you in a similar situation? I have several staff members who are unaccounted for, and I have one, unfortunately, for whom we presume the worst. In terms of team of international staff that we have, it's very challenging working conditions. We have to relocate from our office in Gaza City, and we are currently in a temporary office that we are also all sleeping in together and trying our best to find solutions for both our team as well as for our operation.

I mean, how do you yourself find that continuous Israeli bombardment?

The hostilities are difficult to deal with. It's not easy for many of our staff to listen to airstrikes going on around them. And I really feel much more for my colleagues that have children, because they are the ones that are having to look after them and explain to them in as calm a

way as possible as to what's going on and to try and alleviate some of their fears. And it's really them who I think are more. William Schomburg talking to Julian Marshall.

Earlier I got an update on Israel's military plans and first the humanitarian situation in Gaza from our correspondent in Jerusalem, Paul Adams. It is deteriorating all the time. The airstrikes, as you've just heard, very graphically illustrated there during Rushdie's report, those are going on all the time throughout the Gaza Strip. And, you know, we've also heard from the UN that have been kind of counting down to today as the day when they reckon they will finally run out of fuel. And as a result of that, the UN is saying it's going to have to start limiting its operations, which look after the interests of some 600,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but also hundreds of thousands of others who are not technically refugees. So the UN is facing an enormous and mounting humanitarian challenge. And without fuel, they say they can't do it. They do say that that moment is coming. Now, the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has once again said that Israel is preparing for a ground invasion without specifying when it might happen. Are all these international calls for restraints perhaps having an effect on the timetable? It's very hard to know. I mean, he went on television tonight, Mr Netanyahu, in a prime time address, which left, I think, a lot of people scratching their heads. He did say that the government and the chief of staff of the army had agreed unanimously on the timing of a ground invasion, but that's not quite the same as saying a date has been set. And he certainly gave no indication as to when that moment would come. We've been hearing lots of talk about humanitarian pauses, the Americans, the Canadians, and I think some European governments have been urging some kind of pause in hostilities. We've also been hearing that the United States may be asking for a delay as it gets some of its own defences in place in the region. Of course, America has all sorts of military bases dotted around the Middle East and the Gulf, and there's some suggestion that they want to make sure all of that is properly protected because, of course, there is this lingering fear that an escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip could trigger some wider conflict. For whatever reasons, it does seem as though this is still somewhat on hold. The hostage issue, of course, is another factor in all of that, so we could be in this holding pattern for some time to come. Paul Adams in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the UN Security Council in New York has rejected two opposing U.S. and Russian-drafted resolutions that had sought to pause the fighting between Israel and Hamas and open the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza. We'll hear more about that in a moment. But Israel is still furious about comments from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday that the Hamas attack didn't happen in a vacuum. On Wednesday in New York, he said his comments had been misinterpreted. I am shocked by the misrepresentations by some of my statements yesterday in the Security Council, as if I was justifying acts of terror by Hamas. This is false. It was the opposite. However, in response, Israel's UN ambassador said it was a disgrace that the Secretary General hadn't retracted his words or apologized and again called on him to resign. Let's return to those two failed votes on passing a UN resolution on the Israel-Gaza conflict. At least nine votes are required and no vetoes by the permanent members of the Council, the U.S., France, Britain, Russia or China, for it to be adopted. Our correspondent in New York, Neda Taufik, has the latest. This is the fourth time now that the Security Council has failed to act on the desperate humanitarian concerns in Gaza. This was actually Russia's second attempt at a resolution. The United States had previously vetoed a resolution and then put forward their own. And here we are with both of their attempts

failing. First up was that U.S. drafted resolution, which called for humanitarian pauses. But crucially, it did what the West wanted, which was to put language in expressing country's right to self-defense without naming Israel directly. But Russia and China vetoed that draft. They said it did not call for a ceasefire, which is what UN officials, what Arab countries are calling for, and they said it would give a green light to further escalation of the war. And also notable was the fact that the UAE, which really represents the Arab countries on the Council, said that the priority of any resolution had to be valuing Palestinian life equally to Israeli life. And she said that the Council couldn't be silent on issues of forced displacement and couldn't be ambiguous about the fact that the Gaza Strip was occupied territory. So she felt that was missing from the resolution. We then had a vote on Russia's draft, which didn't even get enough support in the Council to pass. And we heard the United States slamming Russia, saying they were just trying to score political points. They hadn't really consulted with members, and they just wanted to divide the Council. So we really saw these geopolitical tensions playing out in the Council and yet again unable to really act despite the pleas from UN officials.

Nader Tafik at the UN in New York. Now, some other news. And just over three weeks after U.S. Republicans ejected their own Kevin McCarthy, a Speaker of the House of Representatives, they've finally settled on replacement. The ousting of the party's most senior-elected politician caused paralysis in the U.S. Congress while highlighting divisions among the Republicans. They rejected three candidates before finally settling on Mike Johnson, a right-wing Trump supporter. Our Washington correspondent David Willis told me more about the new Speaker. Mike Johnson secured the 217 votes that he needed to be elected the 56th Speaker of the House of Representatives, doing what three previous party nominees had tried to do, of course, but failed, namely gain the support both of mainstream Republicans and members of the hard right of the party, which had taken turns, if you like, in sinking previous Speaker candidates. He's the most junior lawmaker in decades to be elected Speaker, and he may also be, as you pointed out, the most conservative. Mr. Johnson opposes abortion rights and same-sex marriage, and he is a staunch supporter and close ally of Donald Trump, and he led an unsuccessful appeal by a number of House Republicans following the 2020 presidential election to get the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn election results in states that Donald Trump had lost. That effort, of course, ultimately proved unsuccessful. Will he be any more successful at managing internal Republican divisions than Kevin McCarthy was? That's a very good question, and it is going to be a real battle, I think, for Mr. Johnson as he seeks both to unite this party, which has been tearing itself apart over the course of the last three weeks, since the former Speaker, Kevin McCarthy, was removed following that right-wing revolt and hold on to his own position. It's going to be a baptism of fire for him. As I mentioned, he's not the most experienced lawmaker by any means, and he will immediately be called on to preside over a possible government shutdown that could threaten his job unless he can cut a budget deal favorable to his party and also acceptable to the Democrats. David Willis in Washington. In our earlier Global News podcast, we reported on a major hurricane slamming into the Mexican resort of Acapulco. While at sea, Otis was a category five storm, the most powerful, and it crashed ashore with winds of around 260 kilometers an hour. The storm has now weakened, but there have been flash floods and landslides and extremely destructive winds. Vanessa Buschluter, our online Latin America and Caribbean editor, gave me an update. The Mexican president, Andres Manuel López Obrador, has been speaking

about this hurricane, and he said that communications with the state of Guerrero, where the hurricane made landfall, has been completely broken. So there are no official reports of casualties. The president said he didn't know whether there were any fatalities. The information that we have been getting is from people who have been able to record videos from their hotels where they were staying in this resort town, and the damage that you see there is quite extensive. A lot of windows were blown in by the strength of the wind, and the facade of one shopping center seems to have completely ripped off. Otis, this hurricane, went from a tropical storm

to a category five in just 12 hours, and it hit at 25 minutes past midnight, so in the middle of the night. So a lot of people would have gone to bed thinking that, yes, there was a tropical storm, but it was off the coast, and it would probably take quite a long time to reach their town.

And suddenly, the next thing they knew was that their windows were blown in. The mayor of the town of Acapulco said that people who weren't in houses that were strong enough should remain put,

but those who were in flimsy shacks should definitely try to seek shelter.

But some videos have been shared of people who were trying to reach shelters and then couldn't leave the bus they were in because the strength of the wind was such that it was just too dangerous to leave the bus. Online, Latin America and Caribbean editor, Vanessa Buschluter.

Still to come on the Global News podcast. I never really expected to be able to look in her eyes, for example, and think that this person could simply start talking.

Scientists recreate the face of a Peruvian woman sacrificed 500 years ago.

The rival army factions who've been battling for control of Sudan for half a year say they will return to peace talks in the Saudi city of Jeddah. The fighting between the regular armed forces and the rival paramilitary rapid support forces has left more than 9,000 people dead and five and a half million homeless. The US and Saudi broker negotiations are due to begin on Thursday. So why have the two sides agreed to resume talking now? I asked our Africa regional editor, Richard Hamilton. Well, the army said that they'd accepted this invitation from the Saudis and the US out of a belief that negotiation is one of the means that may end the conflict.

And the paramilitary, the RSF for their part, they've already arrived in Jeddah and they said that was in the hope of reaching a solution that will stop the war and end the suffering of our people. But they don't seem to have cared very much for their people up to now. There's signs that both sides are flagging on the battlefield. The pace of fighting has slowed down in the past week. They've both resorted to long range missiles and military analysts are saying that the army has struggled to repair old war planes and the paramilitary, the RSF, are finding it difficult to treat wounded soldiers. But that may be because they've looted all the hospitals and assaulted doctors and both sides are struggling to pay their rather exhausted forces.

Now, in the early days of the conflict, the first weeks and months, we saw a number of ceasefires agreed and then almost immediately collapse. What are the chances of success of these latest negotiations? People will probably be rightly cynical because, as you say, in May and June those talks collapsed and the Saudis and the Americans were very exasperated with that.

They felt that the negotiations were conducted in bad faith and were just delaying tactics. But I think the war will probably end at some point. I mean, if you look at what happened in South Sudan, they came to a power sharing arrangement, but not before something like 400,000 people were killed. It looks as if an outright victory for either side is no longer

a prospect. So we're seeing this war of attrition probably fizzle out. There's some suggestion that loyalists of the previous leader, Omar el-Bashir, they want to fight on. So the army is a bit divided. They've got nothing to lose. And civilians, crucially, are not yet part of this peace process in Jeddah. Richard Hamilton. Now, to a three-year-old mystery that has puzzled scientists, why hundreds of elephants dropped dead in Southern Africa in 2020. 350 died in Botswana between May and June, then another 35 in Zimbabwe. Elephants of all ages and both sexes

were affected with many walking in circles before collapsing on their faces. Now researchers think they may have worked out why. Our science correspondent, Victoria Gill, has more.

The scientists who made this discovery were investigating the sudden mysterious deaths of 35 elephants, mostly between August and September 2020 in northwestern Zimbabwe. Wearing protective clothing in extreme heat, the team of vets and scientists carried out post-mortem examinations on 15 elephants. They managed to confirm that 13 of the animals had septicemia or blood poisoning when they died. And in six of the bodies, they pinned down a potential cause, identifying a bacterium called *Brucella abortus*. It's a type never seen before in African elephants, but it has been found previously in swabs taken from other species at sites where they've been bitten by tigers or lions. The researchers who are from Zimbabwe, South Africa and the UK think severe drought and shortage of food that year could have compromised the elephant's health, which allowed the infection to overcome their immune defences. Dr Chris Foggin, a vet from Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust and a leading member of the team, says he anticipates more outbreaks in the future, particularly in a changing climate.

The researchers hope to do more work to understand exactly what led to this outbreak, and to come up with ways to intervene to prevent this newly discovered threat to African Savannah elephants. Our science correspondent Victoria Gill. She's known as Juanita or the Inca Ice Maiden, the mummy of a young woman thought to have been sacrificed in a ritual 500 years ago in what is modern day Peru. Clad in a ceremonial tunic and a headpiece, Juanita has become a major tourist attraction in the Andean Sanctuary Museum in the town of Arrauquipa. Her features are barely

distinguishable, but Juanita has now been given a new face by scientists who wanted to show what she might have looked like five centuries ago. Julian Marshall spoke to Dr Damara Socha, who was involved in the facial reconstruction, and archaeologist Dr Johann Reinhard, who discovered the mummy in 1995. I didn't think they would be able to make a reproduction of such a quality of being alive. That's a special kind of craftsmanship in which you can create sort of a living presence. So I never really expected to be able to look in her eyes, for example, and think that this person could simply start talking. And it's quite a haunting image, the idea that it's looking at you across 500 years. The idea behind it was to try and have this pensive look on her face as she's about to await her fate. She knew that it was meant to be a great honor, but of course you're also in a situation that she would have never been in before. She's on the summit of a 21,000 foot peak, must have been feeling the altitude and so forth. But certainly considering that she was about to die, she would be looking out rather pensively. And that's what the sculptor Oscar Nielsen

was trying to get that sort of effect across. Why was she being sacrificed all those years ago? Well, we don't know the exact reason, but we know there are several reasons for doing the human sacrifice. This could follow, for example, the death of a Nican emperor. In general terms,

this royal sacrifice was done at times of extreme stress. In the case of Anpato, where we found this woman, we know that there was a volcanic eruption that had taken place just before the Nican's main

sacrifice is there. And we also know that it had to have been free of ice when they constructed her burial on a summit ridge. And that could only happen with extreme climate change.

Would she have been drugged? We know that she had been chewing cocoa leaves.

Dr Socha, how were you able to get such a faithful reconstruction of this young woman's face? In this case, we use the Manchester technique that is based on the reconstruction freeze of the moscow and then of the soft tissues. And this involved skull measurements, DNA studies, ethnological characteristics. We made the computer tomography of her so we can have the model of her skull. And then we print it. So Oscar Nielsen could work directly on the replica. In the case of Juanita, we have the information about her hairstyle, for example, that we could recreate the corporation with the center of traditional textiles from Chinchero in Cusco. And they handmade textiles, the replica of the original ones. So we try to have all components to have this reconstruction match close to true as possible. And of course, I should point out that she has a cloak draped over her shoulders. That's what you're talking about.

That has also been made for her. And the headdress. Doctors Damara Socha and Johan Reinhardt talking

to Julian Marshall. Now, if you've ever watched TV shows like euphoria, sex, education or Bridgerton,

you may have been surprised by their rather daring approach to romance. But a new study has found that people between the ages of 10 and 24, or Gen Z as they're known, could be switching off when sex is shown on screen. Our reporter Madeleine Drury has the details. Tonight, your house, I'll bring the condoms, you bring the lube. Let's do this. You might not want to watch Netflix's sex education in the same room as your parents. And if you're in Gen Z, you might not want to watch these kind of sex scenes at all. Almost half of young people think sex and romance are too prominent on screen. Me and my friends often feel uncomfortable. My friends and I maybe awkwardly bear through it. Researchers from the University of California in the United States spoke to young people born between 1997 and 2012 who said instead, they want to see more friendships and platonic relationships. We could have a tracing if you want. Sorry. It comes at a time when there has been praise for advancements in the portrayal of intimacy on shows like the BBC's Normal People. Wouldn't really be my cup of tea. I'm much too self-conscious.

The researchers say this shows young people just want to see more diverse relationships while they binge watch. In fact, some said they'd like to see more aromantic or asexual characters.

That's people who do not experience romantic or sexual attraction. And in the real world, other studies have found young people are having less sex than their parents did at their age. When it comes to dating, one study found that 44 percent of Gen Z would rather clean a toilet than go on a date arranged online. Another generational shift could be a foot two.

Youth drinking is in decline across many high-income countries in Western Europe and North America.

Here in the United Kingdom, 16 to 25-year-olds are more likely to be teetotal than any other age group. They say they're worried about health and alcohol is not as cheap as it used to be.

Madeline Drury, and you can hear more stories like that on the BBC's Reliable Source podcast.

Returning to our main news, the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, which has seen a sharp increase in hate crimes against both Muslims and Jews here in London, according to recent figures from the Metropolitan Police. But in a display of unity, an interfaith group has held a peace vigil in the UK capital. Nisa Nashim, which means woman in Arabic and Hebrew, brings together women from both faiths. Shabnam Mahmood went to meet them.

Jewish prayers and Islamic prayers.

The Nisa Nashim group of Jewish and Muslim women from around the country are holding a vigil to pray, grieve and share the pain of the current conflicts between Israel and Gaza.

Most of them are on Zoom, but a few are at the North London home of the group's co-founder Laura Marks. We had to bring people together today to say we're all in pain.

It's still hard to bring two very different fighting communities together.

Our women don't fight. There's so many fantastic women out there who just want to say, look, we're still friends. What's going on over there? There's nothing we can do about it, but we can stop ourselves tearing ourselves apart here in Britain.

And building friendships is the main aim of the group, which formed almost six years ago.

We need to show that we can stick together in light of any differences that we have.

This is Shazia. This is a safe space that we can say what we feel and we can have a dialogue with other people who don't maybe have the same views as us.

University student Rebecca agrees.

It's been very difficult, especially on campus. There's been a lot of division,

a lot of negative talk, and a place like this, Anasana Shim,

the community that we've built together has been really empowering and nurturing in a way that I believe is really special and is difficult to find elsewhere.

Over tea and cake, the group listened to more prayers and poetry.

Actually, the moderators on the groups for Anasana Shim have been very good

at being able to try not to share things from social media, but talking from

our own spaces and how we feel, but always in a considerate manner and trying to come together again using our similarities rather than our differences to build our networks

and make them even stronger.

The similarities are in our belief in God, in our prayers.

We are cousins in terms of our religious backgrounds and so it's a shame that we create differences where there doesn't need to be any.

So we are going to light a candle and just have a moment for quiet.

Our report by Shabnam Mahmood.

That's all from us for now, but the Global News podcast will be back very soon.

This edition was mixed by Caroline Driscoll and produced by Emma Joseph, our editors, Karen Martin. I'm Oliver Conway. Until next time, goodbye.