

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Officials say thousands have starved to death in Tigray

Hello, this is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service with reports and analysis from across the world. The latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising.

Hi, I'm Hannah and I'm very excited to be hosting What in the World? a new daily podcast from the BBC World Service, where we try to help you make sense of the world around you, of the big things that are happening, the small things that are happening and everything in between. Search for What in the World wherever you get your BBC podcasts and hit subscribe.

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

I'm Nick Miles and at 13 hours GMT on Friday the 18th of August, these are our main stories.

The BBC has been told that 1400 people have starved to death in Ethiopia's northern region of Tigray since international food aid was suspended in April. Russia has accused Ukraine of launching a drone attack on Moscow's business district. The growing power of China is expected to occupy the leaders of the United States, Japan and South Korea at a summit later today.

Also in this podcast, I don't think I've had a second yet to think about the potential consequences here, because if things don't turn for the better, I might lose my house in a couple of days time. But I haven't really had a chance to stop and think about that. People are evacuating the Canadian city of Yellowknife as wildfires close in, but some are yet to do so. And as we record this podcast, the deadline is less than five hours away. There was huge relief last year when the Ethiopian government and rebel fighters from the northern region of Tigray signed a peace

deal. Thousands of people were killed and many more displaced during two years of fighting. Normally the end of the conflict brings humanitarian relief, but now the BBC has been told that at least 1400 Tigrayans have died from starvation in recent months because of a lack of food, although a senior official says the number of dead could be much higher. I spoke to our correspondent in the region, Mercy Giver. The situation in Tigray right now is difficult. I think that's the best word to describe it, because we have spoken to people and also just seen what's happening in Tigray of people going for days without food. They are not getting what can sustain them, and especially people who are in refugee camps, but who are being displaced by the two years of war that they cannot even sustain themselves within the camps that they have to go out and beg in the local markets for them to be able to feed themselves and their children. And what led to this is because after the two-year war, we had the WFP in the USAID coming in and just rallying to assist about six million Tigrayans to give them food aid and help them come back to their feet. But now they announced a pause in food aid about three months ago, and this is after they discover that their donations were being stolen and diverted, and a lot of people are being allegedly implicated in this Tigray food aid scandal. So right now people are struggling to get by, and the local officials, they are quoting more than about 1,400 people dying in just about three regions, and this number does not include other regions that have not been tallied. And as much as BBC cannot independently verify this 1,400 figure, we can see the impact of what's happening

in Tigray. Mercy, many, many people are suffering because a few people allegedly stole this food supplies. When is this pause in the food aid going to end? So first of all, the pause happened three months ago, and we have been speaking to WFP, and what they are saying is that they are making plans to resume. They don't know when they will be resuming, but they want to resume at a point where they are fully confident that the assistance will be able to be, you know,

full proof, and that the food and donation that they are giving will be able to reach the intended recipients. So we don't know really when that will happen. That was Mercy Juma.

On the battlefield, air support is seen as critical to troops on the ground, and that's why ever since Russia invaded Ukraine last year, President Zelensky has been urging the West to provide his country with fighter jets. Well, now the transfer of F-16 jets could soon happen. The US has said they'll move quickly to approve the transfer of the fighter jets when Ukrainian pilots are ready to fly them, and that training program was agreed back in May. Yuri Sak, an advisor to Ukraine's Minister of Defense, gave his reaction to the BBC.

This is a very significant reassurance. Acquiring fourth generation aircraft, acquiring F-16s will make our skies more secure, and essentially it will bring our victory closer. Earlier, I asked our correspondent, James Waterhouse, who's in Kiev, if we know when Ukraine will get these jets. Well, if you ask Kiev, not this year, I think the downbeat assessment we had this week was that they weren't expecting to get them as early as the autumn or winter reason being that even with this US green light, which let's be frank, these F-16s will not arrive without the US's say so. Nevertheless, you have that pilot training program going on involving 11 countries, those aircraft, and all of the hardware needed, all of that support equipment and support staff will have to make their way over to Ukraine, and that equates to a time delay of several months. That is clear, and that is long been the frustration to Ukraine. Why? Well, as you said, it is Russia enjoying air superiority, not in the traditional sense where we see Russian jets roaming Ukrainian airspace, but there are more of them in the skies around occupied territories or inside Russia itself, where they are launching relentless missile attacks on Ukraine, as well as making incursions on the front line. And this is why it loops back to President Zelensky's repeated claim. It's not been a subtle messaging campaign, has it, where he said, we need fighter jets and we need them yesterday to unlock that. And I suppose analysts there are thinking it could be a game changer, but it depends on the numbers, I suppose. It does depend on numbers. I mean, if we take the Netherlands, for example, one of the countries that has been given the green light to provide these F-16 fighter jets after training, it's about the models they have that are scheduled to be taken out of service. So with the Netherlands, we're talking about a couple of dozen, roughly. So if you have 11 Western allies, which form part of this green light from the US, then that could add up quite significantly. But they do need to arrive. Pilots do need to be competent in them. They rely completely different systems to the Soviet era migs that are used in Ukraine. And it also depends on Russian air defences. But there is a concern that hasn't gone away here. The West has always been worried about an escalation with Russia. Yet their confidence has grown and we've seen an increase in military aid. But that concern is especially prevalent when we're talking about fighter jets. Because take this scenario. Say you have an American-made fighter jet flying in Ukrainian-occupied airspace and it's engaged with an air defense system and it targets that air defense system, which is in on Russian territory. You then have a much more sizable Western intervention than you could argue with, say, an armored vehicle being driven over the front line. So there are those nerves. But there is clearly a direction of travel that Ukraine will welcome, despite its frustrations. That was James Waterhouse. Well, as Ukraine waits for the fighter jets to arrive, Russia's Defense Ministry says its anti-aircraft systems have shot down a drone over the capital, Moscow. Defense officials say Ukraine is responsible. Air traffic at Moscow's airports was also disrupted. More details from our correspondent, Will Vernon,

in Moscow. The authorities say air defense systems shot down a drone in the west of the city centre overnight. The statement claimed Ukraine was responsible. Video posted on social media shows an explosion near the Moscow city business district, an area that's been attacked before. Today, a major exhibition centre was damaged, although it's not clear whether this was caused by falling debris or whether the drone hit its target. Drone attacks in areas around Moscow are common. This incident took place just five kilometres from the Kremlin. That was Will Vernon.

Back in May, the World Health Organization declared an end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency. But it did emphasise that coronavirus was still a threat. Now, the WHO has just announced

that it's closely monitoring a new variant, which has been detected in Israel, Denmark and the United

States. Imaging folks in Geneva, where the WHO is based, tell me what we know.

Not as much as the WHO would clearly like to know. What it's been called is BA 2.86, and how it could

be a distant relative descendant of Omicron. But what is worrying the WHO and why they've classified

it as a variant under monitoring is because it shows quite a lot of mutations. Some variants only show a couple. They're almost identical to their parent, if you like. This one not, and the more mutations a new variant shows, the more likely the way it affects a human being could change, the more likely, crucially, it could evade existing vaccines. Early days, though, not much sequencing going on, and that's part of the problem. So close analysis before we know exactly what we're dealing with this variant. So prudent to be cautious at the moment about this particular variant. What about the way countries are testing? A lot of them have stopped testing for coronavirus, haven't they? But what do we know about the impact or spread of the disease

globally now? Well, we know that people are still dying, and there are still many, many, many cases. Unfortunately, some of the country's best resource to carry on with testing, tracing, and sequencing, and this is where you spot a new variant, have relaxed those systems. And I think here in Geneva, there's a certain amount of frustration at WHO headquarters, because it's this kind of taking your eye off the ball, which could allow not just COVID, but a new infectious disease to emerge, which could send us back to, well, hopefully not, but could send us back to all the rigors of 2020 and lockdowns. So the WHO really would like countries to focus hard on testing people and analyzing new strains so that we know what we're dealing with. And also, in case we need a new vaccine for COVID, drug companies need to know what the new variant looks like exactly to make the vaccine as effective as possible.

Image and folks. Camp David, the country retreat of US presidents, has a long track record of being the setting for historic foreign policy agreements. And later, for the first time, President Biden is hosting both the Japanese and the South Korean presidents there. So what's brought these three leaders together? I spoke to our Asia Pacific editor, Michael Bristo. This is actually a major diplomatic event. United States, South Korea, Japan are already allies, but essentially what is going to happen later today is they're going to deepen that alliance, agree to share more information on security, that kind of thing. A major moment really in the diplomatic history of these countries brought about partly because President Biden has reengaged America with its traditional allies after President Trump, but mostly because the leaders of both South Korea and Japan have decided

to put the antagonism over Japan's wartime aggression in Korea behind them and look to the future and particularly ahead they see the growing power of China in East Asia and they want to come

together to try and essentially do something about that. They know that on their own, they don't really

stand a chance against China, so they're reengaging with each other and re-energizing their alliance.

And it's quite predictable, but what do China's views on this? Well, already they've shown their opposition, their annoyance to this kind of alliance. Foreign Ministry spokesman today said really the Asia-Pacific region shouldn't be a wrestling ground for geopolitical rivalry. Essentially China, from what it said and done over recent years, sees itself as a growing power in the region, the United States as the waning power and doesn't want something like this where countries coming together to form an alliance against themselves. And over recent weeks they've become actually the Chinese quite desperate in trying to persuade South Korea and Japan not to engage with America in this way. This is what the Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a conference

quite recently. American see all visitors from China, South Korea and Japan as Asians.

They can't tell the difference. No matter how yellow you dye your hair or how sharp you make your nose, you'll never turn into a Westerner. You have to know your roots.

A really quite strident comment there by the Chinese Foreign Ministry and there were understandably some accusations of racism, but on the diplomatic front I think it's quite telling actually that it suggests to me that China's losing the argument. If you have to appeal on racial grounds for countries to support you then essentially you're not doing a very good job at persuading you to support them because of the arguments. That was Michael Bristo, a woman in South Africa who made headlines when she was jailed for kidnapping a baby Zephania nurse and raising her as her own will be released on parole and placed under correctional supervision for three years. In 1997 Livona Solomon abducted Zephania from a hospital in Cape Town

when she was just two days old taking her from her sleeping mother's bedside. The crime came to light in 2016 when Zephania unknowingly made friends with her biological sister. After their friends noticed the striking resemblance, the girls decided to take a DNA test which led to Solomon's arrest and imprisonment. She served seven years of her tenure sentence. My colleague James Coppnell spoke to our correspondent in Johannesburg, Nomsa Maseca. The nurse family, they have always celebrated Zephania's birthday to commemorate it and when they did find out that she's still out there and she's alive and she lived just a few kilometers from their home, that was something else for them and that is why it's still making headlines here in South Africa with people beginning to ask questions about how many more children are out there and not too far from their families where they were stolen from. So it is possible that there are other cases like this that haven't been in the news. Absolutely, particularly in the early 1990s when security was not as tight in hospital maternity or it's particularly where anyone who claims to be family was allowed to walk in and visit a mom and a baby and what are the chances most mothers at that time

after they have given birth of course they exhausted, they're sleeping and the baby disappears. What happened do we know to Zephania nurse in the subsequent years?

Well Zephania continued to live with Levona Solomon's husband because he raised her as his own even

during the trial. It was very difficult for her to come to terms with the fact that the two people that raised her were actually not her biological parents but they raised her as such but when the truth was revealed she has tried to build somewhat of a relationship with her biological parents and she has in the past said that relationship is going well but she's also spoken about Levona Solomon the woman who raised her as her own and said that she's very happy that Levona

is finally going to be released from prison and that she hopes that she will be rehabilitated so that she's able to move on with her life. Does the fact that Levona Solomon is going to get out on parole does that suggest that she has expressed remorse for what she did? You know from the beginning of the trial you know there were several lies that she told during the trial where she says she was also a victim of the circumstances because she claimed that she was given this baby at a train station and not that she actually went in and stole the baby herself but the judge at the time said you knew that this child was not yours you had so many opportunities to take her to authorities and report this child as you found her as you claim however you continued raising her so where's the remorse and also the fact that she pleaded not guilty to the charge also made the nurse family and of course the judge believe that she did not show any remorse. Nomsa Maseko in Johannesburg speaking to my colleague James Cocknop.

Still to come. Parmesan is one of the most counter-fated cheeses and it's estimated that these knockoffs made two billion dollars in the last year alone. So could microchips stop the production of counterfeit cheeses? Wow what an experience to be a part of the Tokyo Olympics. It's so edged in my memory. It's one of the pinnacles of my athletic career.

On the podium is the podcast where Olympic and Paralympic athletes share their remarkable stories from the struggles. Lots of sacrifices, lots of hard work, tears, a lot of things that the outside world doesn't know. To the victories. In the water I could do anything that anybody else could do. On the podium from the BBC World Service find it wherever you get your BBC podcasts.

Welcome back to the Global News Podcast. Evacuating an entire city is a huge logistical challenge. The authorities in Yellowknife in Canada's far north have the added problem of a raging wildfire bearing down on them. There are just two options. You can either fly out if you can get a flight or there's just one road out with safe evacuation centres hundreds of kilometres away.

They've set a deadline of noon local time for the 20,000 residents to get out and that's just four hours away or so as we record this. Whilst most residents are now fleeing their homes to nearby towns, Dr Michelle Tuma from an organisation called Veterinarians Without Borders is still in Yellowknife for the moment. In Yellowknife we're the capital city of Northwest Territories.

We have a population of about 22,000 people and in our city there's only four veterinarians. I'm one of them. We have been working for the last few weeks on evacuation responses for animals in other nearby communities in the Northwest Territories that have also been devastated with wildfires and now my hometown of Yellowknife needs support and it was just a no-brainer that I needed to stay and help have people safely evacuate with their pets but then also help to take care of any pets that had to be left behind. What about those who've already left?

Olly Williams is a journalist from Yellowknife who evacuated the city on Wednesday and is now in Fort Simpson. People have been leaving since yesterday evening. Some people left even before the evacuation order was declared. They saw the writing on the wall. They realised that this looked

like a relatively bleak situation and they got themselves on the road. I was one of those to be frank with you. About 12-13 hours before the evacuation order was declared I left the city because I think some of us have concluded that this situation was starting to look beyond the control of the authorities and that of course has now proved to be the case and about 20,000 people are being told they've got to get out of the city and get south to safety. There is only one road south and it's not a very big road either. It's one lane in each direction so thousands of people have got to fit down that road. There is one petrol station worth talking about between Yellowknife and Alberta, the province to the south which represents safety. People have been getting in their cars. They've been packing up and I'll be honest with you they've been in relatively good and ordered spirits about it so far and I'm touching word here on fingers crossed and I hope for the best. So far this evacuation has proceeded by road. I think about as well as it could have done. As I say there's one petrol station there. It hasn't run out of fuel. They've kept refuelling that again and again and again. There are line-ups kilometres long to get through that because it's such a long drive but it's going okay. There haven't been any major accidents as you can imagine. All it would take is one. The road would be closed. I don't know what we'd do then. So far so good on that front. The airlift is a different story. They didn't get the airlift going in time this morning because of weather issues so they didn't get as many flights out the door as they wanted to. Now they've got to make up for that tomorrow. They didn't get a flight out from the hospital today to get all the patients out safely the way they hope. Now they've got to get that done tomorrow the clock's ticking. I don't think I've had a second yet to think about the potential consequences here because if things don't turn for the better I might lose my house in a couple of days time but I haven't really had a chance to stop and think about that. There has never been an evacuation on this scale in the Northwest Territories. Very very rarely has there been an evacuation on this scale in Canada. We are facing a critical 24 to 48 hours. Absolutely we are.

Olly Williams. Well as the wildfires in Canada rage on across the Pacific to the west on the Hawaiian island of Maui the devastation caused by the wildfires there is starting to have more widespread ramifications. The head of the emergency management agency for the island has resigned

following criticism that the agency did not sound sirens during the wildfires last week which have left 111 people dead and a thousand missing. Herman and Dyer defended the decision not to use the sirens because of their usual use to warn of incoming tsunamis and that may have caused people to run towards the fires. North America correspondent Sophie Long sent this update from the island. On Wednesday the head of Maui's emergency management agency defended the decision not to sound those sirens. He said that people could have gone Maui. Now Maui is a Hawaiian directional term it means into the mountains or inland. He was implying that people may have been panicked and gone in the wrong direction. Well you'll find very few people here in Maui who will agree with that and today Thursday still Thursday here in Maui the same man Herman and Dyer resigned. Now the only reason he gave for that resignation were unspecified health reasons but of course it comes just 24 hours after he defended that decision not to sound the sirens and this comes while the search and recovery effort is still ongoing the search and recovery teams have now recovered 111 bodies only six of those have been identified so it's still in its early phases really a mobile morgue has arrived in Maui with extra coroners to help with the painstaking task of identifying those who lost their lives. Sophie Long Ecuador was once widely regarded as a safe friendly travel destination a stable nation

with a functioning political system. Now it has become the most murderous in South America. Ecuadorians go to the polls this weekend in the first round of presidential elections.

Last week a candidate was shot dead which sent shockwaves through a nation that was once peaceful

but in the past few years has seen a huge rise in violence because of drug trafficking and organized crime. Our South America correspondent Katie Watson sent this report from Guayaquil.

Out on patrol in Ecuador's biggest city Guayaquil is home to the country's largest port it's a key part of the lucrative drugs routes and now the epicenter of violent crime.

Curfew is about to kick in in Durán an industrial part of the city overrun by traffickers.

The police set up checkpoints patting drivers down and using a flashlight to check for drugs and weapons inside vehicles. Some officers are so scared of reprisals by gangs they cover their faces with black balaclavas. Captain Victor Quezpas Valencia is head of tonight's operation.

Gangs want to win territory we're dealing with very violent deaths people being found hanging from bridges or cutting to pieces international criminal organizations are recruiting people here

but they have lots of money there's a total imbalance between organized crime and the police trying to stop it. Mexican and Colombian cartels have infiltrated local gangs as they vie for domination of the cocaine trade. Ecuador was hit hard by covid and they've taken advantage of a

country broken by a pandemic and by corrupt politics. We just stopped and the police have got out and they're doing another operation basically checking cars they go along and I've

just been told that we're at an important area where on the one side there's a particular gang the latin kings and on the other side gangs including los treneros there are several but

basically this is a turf war along this road. As the campaign draws to a close ahead of this weekend's elections crime is top of the agenda. The words peace and security are repeated at

candidate Daniel Noboa's closing campaign. Organizers know that will chime with Ecuadorians still in shock after Fernando Villavicencio's murder last week. We live in an unsafe society

we have to do campaign even with our buddha proof vest so that is a very negative sign.

I think that we need to also work on the social side and problem is that by not giving people opportunities we're feeding these organizations with with young new members.

But parading through drug trafficking territory carries big risks shortly after our interview a nearby shootout brought a halt to the rally.

The chaos filmed on social media Daniel Noboa's team left sheltering in the campaign truck.

These elections were called early after the current leader dissolved the national assembly to avoid an impeachment vote. The chaotic politics in this country makes solving Ecuador's problems a challenge but the crisis is one that goes far beyond Ecuador's control.

As long as demand for cocaine keeps soaring the cartels will fight for domination and the body count will keep rising. That was Katie Watson reporting from Ecuador.

Seductress vamp a woman of easy virtue. They're uncomfortable words to say and offensive obviously

to many people and I've said them because they're all words that judges in India have been able to use up until now in their written judgments and in the courtroom but this is all set to change

as they've been handed a new guidebook which details a list of 40 words to avoid when describing women. I spoke to our correspondent Divya Arya in Delhi.

One would assume that they would not be part of ordinary life or especially judicial pronouncements but they have been in fact I've reported extensively on judgments that stereotype

women using such words and this is exactly what the handbook is saying that in some cases stereotypes about women in terms of their character in terms of how they should behave especially in the context of sexual violence in the context of domestic violence those stereotypes are absorbed by judges and lawyers as much as by general society and if we don't call them out they either end up impacting outcomes that is judgments or even the way the judgments are pronounced by just reinforcing those stereotypes so it has a glossary of 40 words as you said and just to give you a flavor some of the recommendations in those words are like seductress slut whore all of these words should just be replaced by women or Indian women western women should be replaced by women or women of loose morals chased women career women should all be replaced by just women because these are all attributes that are being associated with them another thing that it suggests is things like ravished should just be replaced by assaulted because it suggests certain aspect of how assault happens from a perspective of a man in terms of enjoyment not really violence which is the prison from which it should be viewed similarly the use of the term violated which indicates that when a woman is raped her honor is violated she's demeaned in a certain way and it says that violated should again be replaced by neutral terms like assaulted and raped that was Divya Arya in Delhi now as a good meal often ends with a cheese course so today's podcast ends with a cheese story parmesan is one of the world's most famous but for it to be truly called parmesan it has to be made in Italy and under certain conditions and now cheese makers in Italy are turning to the world of tech in order to protect their precious cheese brand a new microchip is being trialled in the north of the country all with the aim of stamping out a rise in fakes the newsroom's Keres Maidment reports the process of making parmesan cheese is a craft that dates back to the middle ages and this technique has been protected ever since thanks to strict European guidelines these state that a cheese can only be classed as true parmigiano reggiano if it is made in a specific region of northern Italy it's matured for 12 months and a team of experts have given their seal of approval however this system is being threatened by fakes which have stormed the market in fact parmesan is one of the most counterfated cheeses and it's estimated that these knockoffs made two billion dollars in the last year alone a figure that's not too far off the real version which made just under 2.4 billion so how can you make sure you're buying the real deal parmesan producers have turned to the world of tech and are testing a new microchip the same size as a grain of salt it's inserted into the waxy rind on the outside and consumers will be able to scan and see exactly where their cheeses come from its placement on the wheel means it's unlikely to be eaten but the chip is food safe and can sit in stomach acid for weeks without leaking any harmful substances it's thought that these cheesy chips could pave the way for a whole new form of product verification as the same technology could be used in livestock, car parts and drug authentication but for now we'll have to wait and see how the 120,000 chipped parmesan wheels fare in this trial and whether they'll be able to grate out the fraudsters that was Keres Maidman and that's all from us for now but before we go here's Jackie with news of the next happy pot yes in this edition the director determined to improve the representation of disabled people in film and TV an invitation to brilliant people to join in a competition to bring light to places without reliable electricity the Ukrainian soldier who became a ballet star after losing both legs in the war the surfers rescued after 36 hours out at sea and a story of community art and a really good dress all in the happy pod available from

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Officials say thousands have starved to death in Tigray

saturday august the 19th and if you want to comment on this podcast all the topics covered in it you can send us an email the address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk you can also find us on twitter of course at globalnewspod this edition was mixed by Lewis Alsop and the producer was jack graismark the editor is Karen Martin i'm nick marz and until next time goodbye