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I'm Jackie Leonard and at 13 hours GMT on Wednesday the 18th of October. These are our main stories. President Biden is visiting Israel in a show of support during its continued war against Hamas in Gaza. You're not alone. You are not alone. As I emphasized earlier, we will continue to have Israel's back as you work to defend your people.

His visit comes less than a day after a huge explosion at a Gaza hospital. Hamas blames an Israeli airstrike. Israel blames a misfire by Palestinian militants.

Also in this podcast, new evidence of devastating ethnic violence in western Sudan.

What we're seeing is a pattern of villages being burnt. That scale is enormous.

And President Xi Jinping celebrates the achievements of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

The support from the US for Israel couldn't be clearer. Not only has President Biden expressed his backing by turning up in Israel, he's also said that from what he's seen, he thinks Tuesday's explosion at a hospital in Gaza was not Israel's fault. It was, in his words, that of the other team.

He had been expecting to see Arab leaders on this trip to the region too, but in the aftermath of the hospital explosion, that was called off. The incident has only stoked the ever-rising tensions. Speaking jointly at a news conference, here's what Benjamin Netanyahu and Mr Biden had to say.

Mr President, you're meeting with our United War Cabinet, united and resolved to lead Israel to victory. This will be a different kind of war because Hamas is a different kind of enemy.

While Israel seeks to minimize civilian casualties, Hamas seeks to maximize civilian casualties.

Hamas wants to kill as many Israelis as possible and has no regard whatsoever to Palestinian lives.

Every day, they perpetrate a double war crime, targeting our civilians while hiding behind their civilians, embedding themselves in the civilian population and using them as human shields.

We've seen the cost of this terrible double war crime against humanity. The Hamas is perpetrating in the last 11 days. As Israel legitimately targets terrorists, civilians are unfortunately harmed. Hamas is responsible and should be held accountable for all civilian casualties. We saw the cost of this terrible war crime yesterday. When a rocket fired by a Palestinian terrorist misfired and landed on a Palestinian hospital. The entire world was rightfully outraged, but this outrage should be directed not in Israel, but at the terrorists.

As we proceed in this war, Israel will do everything it can to keep civilians out of harm's way.

We have asked them and will continue to ask them to move to safer areas. We'll continue to work with you, Mr. President, to assure that the minimal requirements are met and we'll continue to work together to get our hostages out. Mr. President, the road to victory will be long and hard, but united in purpose and with a deep sense of justice and the unbreakable spirit of our soldiers and our people, Israel will prevail. Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. In the wake of Hamas's appalling terrorist assaults, brutal and humane, almost beyond belief what they did, this cabinet came together and standing strong, standing united, and I want you to know you're not alone. You are not alone. As I emphasized earlier, we will continue to have Israel's back as you work to defend your people. We'll continue to work with you and partners across the region to prevent more tragedy to innocent civilians. 75 years ago, your founders declared that this nation would be one based on freedom, justice, and peace.

Based on freedom, justice, and peace. The United States stands with you in defense of that freedom,

in pursuit of that justice, and in support of that peace. Today, tomorrow, and always, we promise you.

That was President Biden. We also heard from Benjamin Netanyahu. Our Middle East correspondent Yolanda Nell is in Jerusalem and was watching that joint appearance. First, we learned that the US, which of course will have its own intelligence and resources too, is convinced by Israel's explanation of what happened at Al-Ahli Hospital overnight in Gaza, basically blaming Islamic Jihad rockets for misfiring with Mr. Biden telling Benjamin Netanyahu it appears it was done by the other team. He talked about how he was deeply saddened and outraged by that incident, but he did acknowledge there's a lot of people out there who are not so sure. We've got to overcome a lot of things. Of course, Hamas and Palestinian authorities in general are blaming the deaths at the hospital on an Israeli airstrike. Mr. Biden also spoke about the need to free the hostages in the Gaza Strip that were taken by Hamas, including children, and he talked about those attacks just saying, you know, imagine what those children hiding from Hamas were thinking, it's beyond my comprehension. What do you think each leader wants to get out of this visit?

For Mr. Netanyahu, you saw there was a hug at the airport. This was a rare act, a presidential visit to a war zone. He thanked Mr. Biden for what he called his moral clarity. He said, you've rightly drawn a clear line between the forces of civilization and the forces of barbarism, and referred to a tweet by Mr. Biden, an entry on X, where he talked about Hamas' actions as sheer evil. For Mr. Biden, this was much more difficult. I mean, it was meant to be a visit, like to show, of course, wartime solidarity after the horrors of that Hamas attack on the 7th of October. And I think, of course, he did that. But no announcements really on the other important diplomatic issues where we are looking for progress. And that all became much more problematic once you could only see the Israeli leader and victims of recent events on the Israeli side, but not meet the Arab leaders, the allies of the US as he originally planned. And we haven't had announcements then on any efforts to persuade Israel to open up a kind of humanitarian corridor to Gaza to create safe areas there for civilians, if he could make advances on that, so that he could have better talks with the US's Arab allies, use them as mediators, perhaps on the hostage issue. So we've now got a much more complicated picture around the region where tensions are really inflamed. As you say, he wasn't able to go and have this meeting with regional Arab leaders. But who else might he be able to speak to on this trip or around this trip? Although he's not, you know, going to Jordan as planned, I mean, he has specified that on the way home, he will be speaking to the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, the head of the Palestinian

authorities, who's, of course, a political rival of Hamas, also to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, C.C. of Egypt. Egypt has an important role here at Neighbours, both Gaza and Israel. It has the RAFA crossing, the only crossing, into Gaza, not controlled by Israel, and you've got these hundreds of lorries of aid waiting in Egypt's Sinai to try to go into Gaza.

Yolanda now, and as she said, both sides are continuing to blame each other for the destruction at the Akli Hospital in Gaza City. Investigations are continuing, but what we do know is that hundreds of people have been reported dead after the blast on Tuesday evening. Many more were injured. The BBC's Rushdie Abu Alouf visited the site on Wednesday morning.

The BBC's Rushdie Abu Alouf will protest

are being staged around the Middle East in response to the blast at the hospital.

Thousands have been holding a rally outside the Israeli Embassy in the Jordanian capital,

Amman, while a big protest is taking place outside the French Embassy in Tunis, with people condemning Western countries for supporting Israel. There are similar scenes in Turkey and in Iraq, where the U.S. military says it's intercepted two drones targeting its forces. The BBC's security correspondent Frank Gardner told us about the potential security challenges the region's facing. Well, they're very serious. Remember that the U.S. has been trying to disengage itself in this region for some time. It no longer depends on oil from the Middle East and the way it used to. It has pretty much given up trying to knock heads together in terms of a long moribund Palestinian-Israeli peace process. So this was an unplanned visit that's rather hastily planned, that was never intended to be. The security challenge, I think, is trying to stop it escalating, trying to reduce tensions. Last night's explosion at the Al-Ahli Hospital, whoever was behind it, has raised tensions even further. There's no question that the region around Israel all thinks Israel was responsible, which it denies. It says it was Palestinian-Islamic she had. The big question is where does Iran stand on all of this? Because Iran sees an opportunity to humble and humiliate and hurt Israel via its proxies. It doesn't want to get into an actual shooting war with Israel because that will be hugely damaging. But it has got its proxies, the biggest one of which is Hezbollah, which has got around 150,000 rockets, many of which are long-range precision guided. They could take out specific buildings in Tel Aviv. They could flatten whole ministries if they wanted. The retribution would be huge, but it's a possibility. Israel fought a war with Hezbollah in 2006 and neither side really won. So there have been some quite threatening statements coming out of Iran saying we can't stand idly by while Gaza gets pummeled. I think President Biden will want to get the Israelis to show a bit more restraint in their punishment of Hamas because it's killing so many civilians. Now, obviously, his visit has been somewhat curtailed. He was hoping to see Arab leaders. That has now been cancelled. Does his visit to Israel still have the potential to reduce tensions in the air? Well, it does, I think, if he can get, if he can show that there is some kind of humanitarian benefit out of this. If he can get, for example, if the Israelis to open the border to let in humanitarian supplies. Remember, there is a huge great big convoy of articulated trucks sitting at Rafa on the Egyptian side of the border, waiting to deliver desperately needed supplies to the civilian population in Gaza. And so far, the Israeli attitude has been, while you've got our hostages, we're not going to open the borders. You're stuck there until you release our hostages. And there seems to be a kind of impasse. Hamas don't want to do that. They don't want to release them. And Israel doesn't want to open the border. The same time, you've got a number of dual nationals and foreign nationals who are desperately trying to get out of Gaza. Egypt doesn't at the moment want to open the border that way to let them out. It's very wary of having a kind of tented city springing up in the north of the Sinai, which may end up being a permanent refugee camp in the way that the 1948 refugee crisis became exactly that. That was Frank Gardner. And as he said, even those with foreign passports currently have no way to leave Gaza. That's left families around the world living in fear for their loved ones. Ahmad Abu Foul, a doctor in the UK, spoke to my colleague, Michelle Hussein, alongside his brother, Mohammed, who's in Southern Gaza. We are a family of 16. We are all British citizens. We have been trapped here in Gaza Strip. But there is no such case here in Gaza. We listened to the instructions as we told to

move south of Gaza. So we moved there. And where we have been, there was bombing. We had to move

again and again and again. In total, we moved five times. We have 80 children. The oldest is six. The youngest is four months old. They are all scared. We don't have a clean water. We don't have electricity. We barely can find somewhere to go to the toilet to find the clean water to drink, to make a baby, a bottle of milk. This is inhuman, actually. We can't do this.

Where are you now? You're family, the 16 of you?

Yeah, we are in Rafa. A friend of ours, he managed to find us a room four by four meters, just to sit there. It's cold here. We had to put the kids next to each other, to warm each other.

Ahmad, this is your younger brother. What is it like for you, knowing that your family are in that position? It's horrible. It's unbearable. Because I feel absolutely helpless. There's nothing that we can do here to help and get our family back home to safety.

Mohammad, are you hoping that if that border opens to foreign passport holders, you at least will be able to leave Gaza? I don't think this is possible. We've been at the Rafa crossing border two times in the last five days. There is hundreds of people there, maybe thousands. There is no system. There is no structural way we can get out of Gaza. What would be the most is the babies. You know, I'm not scared for my life. I'm scared for my baby's life.

This morning, at 3 a.m. while the kids were sleeping, my daughter, she's three years old, she went out screaming and she was very scared. I think she's traumatised. She don't have hope. This is something really hard to describe. You don't see it here.

Ahmad, what's the how much of your day is spent trying to work out if your family is still safe or still alive? Day is like a night for me. We hardly manage to get and sleep because it's very dynamic and it's changing by the hour. I find myself that I have to stay awake. That's something that cannot control. I'm glued to the TV, to news outlets, to phone and all of that. It's very hard and myself as a young family and I found that I'm struggling the last few days to go to work. It's very hard because we lose connection. We lost connection with Mohammed and the rest of my family for good 24 hours a couple of days ago and that was the most scary thing. It's something that I cannot even describe. I have a message for the international community. This is a bit of a well, bit of a way. We need to get out of here as soon as possible. This is a very difficult time.

Mohammed and Ahmad Abu Foul talking to Michelle Hussein. Now, you might have heard the special

edition that we recorded answering listeners' questions on events in Israel and Gaza. The response was such that we're going to do another one. So do please send us your questions and our correspondence. We'll try to provide context and clarity. You know what to do. Please record us a voice message or simply write your question and email it to the usual address, global podcast at bbc.co.uk.

To other news now, the BBC has seen new evidence of the devastating ethnic violence gripping Western Sudan. Information from satellite images and social media shows that at least 68 villages in Darfur have been burned since fighting broke out in April. For the first time, a British government minister has described what's happening there as having all the hallmarks

of ethnic cleansing. Our diplomatic correspondent James Landale has been finding out more. A mob rampages through Algerna, the capital of West Darfur.

Arab militias attacking members of the local Masalit tribe, and they're using their favourite weapon, thai.

In the streets, burning vehicles spew thick black fumes.

Plumes of smoke rise from building set ablaze. So what we have here is a map of essentially burned villages within Sudan. In a small office in London, a group of government-funded researchers are recording the ethnic violence gripping Western Sudan. The Centre for Information Resilience uses satellite data and social media to track the villages going up in flames.

Its director of investigations, Ben Strick, told me at least 68 villages had been targeted with fire since April. What we're seeing is a pattern of villages being burnt, one after the other after the other, specifically in Darfur alone, which is where we're seeing some of the heaviest violence outside of Khartoum. Some of them whole villages that have been wiped out. That scale is enormous when we think upon the impact of civilians. In August, they logged one militia convoy burning no fewer than nine villages in one day alone. Sometimes this is infighting between Arab tribes, sometimes it is Arab against non-Arab, like the Masalit. Either way, the UK Africa Minister, Andrew Mitchell, is clear what it amounts to. Innocent people are being attacked by militias, particularly by the RSF. They are being hounded from their homes and murdered. Women are being raped and attacked. Houses are being burnt, crops and cattle destroyed. This has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing. Amin Yakubu fled Darfur last month for a refugee camp in Chad, running into the bush with his neighbours to escape the violence, stepping over bodies in the process.

Whenever attacks happen, everyone is a victim. No one sleeps at night. Everyone has to lie flat on the floor due to the incessant gun battles. The aim of the researchers is to gather evidence that could one day bring to justice those responsible, many of whom are members of the RSF. Their opponent, the leader of Sudan's armed forces, General Al-Burhan, told me recently he'd cooperate with international prosecutors.

We will help anybody that helps us or stands with us to capture these criminals and present them to justice. Even with the International Criminal Court, we can cooperate with it to present these perpetrators of crime. For now, the violence and the killings go on. Arab militias riding from village to village on their motorbikes, leaving death and ash in their wake.

James Landale reporting. A shopkeeper from London has been sentenced to 11 years in prison for heading a major human trafficking ring. Heuer Rahimpour was one of 21 people facing trial in Belgium as part of a Europe-wide investigation. Sofia Betitzer reports from Brussels. Heuer Rahimpour

arrived in Britain in 2016 and claimed asylum as an Iranian Kurd fleeing persecution. He was given leave to remain and set up a barber's shop in Camden. But from the UK, he organised the logistics of a far-reaching criminal operation, procuring boats from Turkey and China and transporting them to Europe. Their boats were handed to groups of migrants waiting near the sea in Calais and Dunkirk. The migrants were given basic information about how to use them to get to Britain.

Sofia Betitzer in Brussels. President Vladimir Putin doesn't do much international travel since his troops invaded Ukraine last year, but he is guest of honour in Beijing for a summit celebrating 10 years of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. His host, President Xi, said China would not engage in what he called geopolitical games. He outlined what he believed the project had achieved.

Over these 10 years, we have endeavoured to build a global network of connectivity consisting of economic corridors, international transportation routes and information highway, as well as

railways, roads, airports, ports, pipelines and power grids covering the land, the ocean, the sky and the internet. Our Beijing correspondent, Stephen McDonnell, is at that summit and he began by explaining the Belt and Road Initiative. Basically, it's a vision to have transport infrastructure better connecting China with Europe via Central Asia and also incorporating Africa. So it's all this money in the form of loans and other encouragement and whatnot to build what sea links, rail links, bridges, roads and the like. And he says that we're now at the stage of these having gone from blueprints to real projects to boost the world's flow of goods. Well, you are at this huge summit to celebrate its achievements and to look forward to its future. President Xi told the conference that China rejects economic coercion and decoupling. What did he mean? Well, he means a couple of things there. When he's speaking about rejecting decoupling and delinking, I think he said delinking as well, he's talking a lot there about the US and Europe and this idea that, well, that's now been floating around some Western countries that Western democracies need to distance themselves slightly from China because of the dangers inherent of cooperating with China, because of, I don't know, spying via computer hacking or because China has been stealing the intellectual property of Western companies. So that's what he's talking about there. But interestingly, what he also said in the same breath is that China opposes unilateral sanctions and economic coercion. Now, what that's a message to is Vladimir Putin who's sitting there in the audience, along with all these other world leaders, applauding. It would have been music to Vladimir Putin's ears that China opposes unilateral sanctions. And that's because the Russian leader, who doesn't get around the world very much now because he has, you know, this warrant out for his arrest due to alleged war crimes in Ukraine. And so there are plenty of places he can't go. And so you can rest assured he's made the most of the trip to this forum, lining up the world leaders. He's been meeting at least nine of them by my last count, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, Hungary's Victor Orban, and of course Xi Jinping. And why wouldn't he make, you know, the best use of this because he doesn't have many opportunities to sit down with these people. Stephen MacDonald in Beijing. The US is stepping up its efforts to stop artificial intelligence technology reaching China. The latest ban on some microchips is designed to prevent the Chinese military importing advanced semiconductors or equipment. Our business reporter, Surajana Tiwari, is in Singapore and told us more. The Biden administration has announced plans to halt shipments to China of more advanced artificial intelligence chips. Now that's affected a number of companies, including some well known names like NVIDIA, AMD and Intel with NVIDIA seeing an almost 4% drop in shares as a result of the announcement. Now NVIDIA says the new restrictions will block sales of two high end artificial intelligence chips that it creates just for China and that one of its top of the line gaming chips will also be blocked. Now this isn't the first time that these kinds of measures have been introduced. Last October, the US introduced wide reaching measures to block this type of technology from reaching China. And so what happened was many companies adjusted their workflows and supply chains to comply with the restrictions. You can imagine this is not good for business. These companies say it will impact their customers and it will also affect the entire chip ecosystem which is scattered around the world in a very complex way. And so this isn't good news for them or their customers. Surajana Tiwari. Six

historically important portraits of the Dutch royal family have been returned after they were stolen. The paintings were handed to an art detective called Arthur Brand who made headlines last month after he recovered a van Gogh in a new year bag. On Friday night, a van stopped in front of my home. It was half past 10 at night. It was raining and he asked me to unload some paintings from his van. So I asked him which paintings they were and he explained to me that they were from a reason theft in the Netherlands and he said I was not involved in the theft but I have them now in my possession and I want to get rid of them. So I took them and then of course I called the police. We recovered the van Gogh that made headlines all over the world and in those news flashes was said that the van Gogh was returned because they could not sell it and because of all the fines that were given to the people who got arrested they got eight years in prison. So I think they got nervous. Maybe the police is already on their trail so I think they just wanted to get rid of this hoping that the police would not continue the investigation but the police of course continues the investigation. They will be returned to the town of Meidenblik. They are the owners. Dutch art detective Arthur Brand. Back now to our main story President Biden's visit to Israel amid the grief, anger and accusations surrounding the deaths of reportedly hundreds of people at a hospital in Gaza on Tuesday evening. Hamas blames Israel and anger at the deaths has led Arab leaders to cancel a planned summit with the US president. Speaking alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr Biden backed the Israeli military's claim that the explosion was caused by a rocket misfire by the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad. Our chief international correspondent Lee's Doucet is in southern Israel. She told my colleague Sarah Montague that the hospital attack had overshadowed any hope of progress from Mr Biden's visit.

Even before the horrific incident at Agazan hospital yesterday evening President Biden's decision to come to the region now was seen as high risk. Now he has flown straight into this crisis and not surprisingly he has expressed a very publicly his complete and utter support for the state of Israel. He has done that for the half century he has been in politics and he's been thanked profusely by Israeli leaders. The question now is what is he saying behind closed doors? The American president's aides who spoke to journalists on their way here said that he would have very tough questions. What will he be asking? First of all he will make clear to Israel in private that it will do everything it can to have its back. Military support, financial support, moral support but in return it expects Israel to follow the rules of war to minimize civilian casualties and crucially to get a desperately needed aid into the Gaza Strip. Because Joe Biden knows he's been told by his top diplomat Anthony Blinken that that is the message from all Arab leaders you have to take care of the citizens, the civilians, the innocent Gazans who are coming under non-stop Israeli bombardment. He will also want to make progress on the issue of hostages. Everything about this crisis is unprecedented. President Joe Biden has a very very tough task but he can't leave the region without showing something for his very high risk gamble to come here at this time. And what are we expecting that? I mean is there some hope of aid getting into Gaza? We understand that the Israelis are very reluctant to send aid into Gaza because they say that it will just be diverted by Hamas and Islamic jihad. But we did hear earlier this morning the Israelis being more specific than they have been saying that Gazans should head further south to the coastal area of Al Mubasi and that they would be given international aid there. Now no other details were given. We haven't heard anything from the United Nations and we certainly haven't heard anything about that one way in and out of Gaza, that rough-acrossing in

southern Gaza into Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. There's been so much effort including by the Americans and the British to try to open that to allow foreign passport holders out. Sadly there's no way out for more than two million Gazans with no other passport. And to let that aid which is piling up on the Egyptian side of the border in, food, fuel, water and food, medical supplies, desperately need it. But it's a very, very big ask and all the while military activity is intensifying. Where we are here there's been the constant sound of Israeli artillery going into Gaza, heavy machine gun fire and we see the dark looms of smoke on the horizon. Smoke rising from Gaza city, the city where yesterday evening took place, a devastating attack that's being described as the worst single strike in all of the five Israel-Gaza wars. That was Lee's do-set. And that's it from us for now but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. If you'd like to comment on this podcast or the topics we've covered in it do please send us an email. The address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk. You can also find us on ex formerly known as Twitter at Global News Pod.

This edition was mixed by Sharmini Ashton Griffiths. The producer was Tracy Gordon. Our editor is Karen Martin. I'm Jackie Leonard and until next time, goodbye.

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