

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.

I'm Robin Ince. That is Brian Cox. My favourite topic we've covered recently on The Infinite Monkey Age is black holes. It turns out that it's the one that's listened to most because people keep rewinding it. I loved the one that we made about spiders because we had guests that were just so passionate about the subject and you got scared when that spider came out. That little squeal was beautiful. It was a spider running wild in Australia. It is one of the most exciting episodes we've ever done. The Infinite Monkey Age. Listen wherever you get your BBC podcasts. This is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service.

I'm Gareth Barlow and in the early hours of Wednesday the 8th of March these are our main stories. The Israeli Prime Minister defends a raid on a refugee camp in which six men were killed according to Palestinian health officials. Five women have sued the U.S. state of Texas saying they were denied abortions even though their lives were in danger. And two Americans kidnapped in Mexico have been found dead.

Also in the podcast, drug performers in the U.S. share their thoughts as the state of Tennessee begins restricting children's viewing of drag shows. Protesters in Iran voice their outrage at the poisoning of around a thousand schoolgirls in Iran in recent weeks and it rivals anything I've seen elsewhere. It's not far. It's home. The voice of the man often described as Britain's national treasure David Attenborough as we find out more about his new nature documentary series about the British Isles.

Let's start in the occupied West Bank where Israeli troops killed six Palestinians on Tuesday in a raid on a refugee camp in Jenin. Israel claims that one of the dead was a man who killed two Jewish settlers last month in the town of Awara. Funerals for the Palestinians were held in Jenin soon after the raid. For Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the raid was a victory following the deaths of the settlers who were brothers.

The soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force today eliminated the abominable terrorist who murdered in cold blood the brothers Halal and Yagil Yaniv. Our brave warriors operated surgically

in the heart of the murderer's den. As I say again and again, time and time again, whoever hurts us, his blood is on his head.

For more on the raid, I spoke to our Middle East correspondent Yolanda.

Witnesses reported heavy exchanges of gunfire. There were videos that started circulating on social media where you could see smoke billowing from a building in the camp.

You could see a long line of military vehicles, helicopters flying over those.

The Israeli military has now put out a statement saying that it used shoulder-launched missiles at pursuit of this wanted man inside the camp.

Now, we understand that he was Abdul Fatah Kharrushah, a man of 49, and that he was a member of the Palestinian militant group Hamas, who actually came from Nablus. He'd served time in the Israeli jail and was released late last year.

That's according to Palestinian sources. And the Israeli military, Israeli officials, are saying that he carried out the attack which killed two brothers from settlement.

We know also there was another raid that took place at the same time as this, and that led to the two sons of this 49-year-old man being arrested.

This has been such a flashpoint, such a hot spot in recent months between the two sides. I mean, the Israeli military would say that the force that it used was appropriate because it was acting on the murders of two Israeli civilians, or one actually was still serving in the military, but at the time they were apparent civilians just returning to their home in a settlement outside of Hawara. We've had a statement from a spokesperson for the Palestinian president in Ramallah saying that this was a dangerous escalation. The Israeli government's responsible accusing it of waging all-out war. But of course, there has been so much international condemnation of the recent violence that has taken place. I mean, after that attack which killed the two brothers from the settlement near Hawara, you saw perhaps 400 Jewish settlers who stormed into Hawara in revenge, setting fire to dozens of cars and Palestinian homes. There was one Palestinian man who was shot dead there as well in a village nearby, and more than 100 Palestinians were injured. That caused a lot of shock because although settler violence is an ongoing issue, this was one of the most violent incidents of its kind by Israeli settlers.

Yola now in Jerusalem. Five women have taken the state of Texas to court over abortion rights. Since the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right for women to seek an abortion last year,

many American states, including Texas, have imposed bans or restrictions. The women say the inability to terminate their pregnancies in their home state caused them serious harm. They're asking the court to make it clearer under what conditions doctors can still offer abortions so others can avoid their experiences. One of the women, Lauren Mella, spoke on the steps of the courthouse in Austin. Politicians in Texas are prohibiting health care that they don't understand. They could do something, but they're not, and it's killing us. How is it that I can get an abortion for a dog, but not for me? To understand more about the issues, I spoke to our US correspondent, Namir Iqbal, who told us more about the case. It was really powerful testimony

from these women who have been basically denied, they say, their right to have an abortion, given that they say their lives were at risk, their fetuses were at risk as well. And standing with them was Nancy Northup. She's the president and the head of the Center for Reproductive Rights. It's a group that's dedicated to abortion rights. And she made the point that the lawsuits the first of its kind since Roe v. Wade was overturned, and she was very blunt as well. She said it's now dangerous

to be pregnant in Texas and said no one should be forced to wait at death's door to receive health care. Also, she said that these women she was representing was only the tip of the iceberg. It's really important to stress what these women are after is not an overturning of abortion in Texas. What they want is clarity. When the state of Texas banned abortion, they said there are exceptions. These women are basically saying what are the exceptions and under what conditions? As a result of the lack of clarity, people like Laura Miller, for example, she traveled 800 miles from Texas to the state of Colorado for an abortion. How common is this now to see people move around the country from states that aren't favorable to abortion to states that are more favorable? After Roe v. Wade was overturned, I remember speaking to those groups who believe in abortion rights. And they made a point of saying that about a third of women of reproductive aid in the US after Roe v. Wade is overturned will live more than an hour away from the closest abortion facility. That the number of facilities that actively offer abortion care would be cut by about a tenth. So if you live in Texas, you are surrounded by states that are hostile

to abortion. So you're going to have to travel somewhere, maybe Illinois. And that's only if you can afford it. The polls still suggest that most Americans do believe in abortion rights. And especially when it comes to those who need it because their lives are at risk. So in some ways, this was the women's way of saying to them, look, we are very ordinary everyday women. All of them wanted to have the children. They didn't fit the so-called stereotypes that maybe people have about women who have an abortion. So this was their way of showing the public this is affecting normal everyday women who wanted determination, not because they wanted to get rid of the pregnancy, but because their lives and the life of the fetus was at risk.

Nomer Iqbal. Families of two US citizens kidnapped in Mexico and have been told that their relatives have died. Two other Americans who survived have been freed. One of them though is injured. The group were caught up in a firefight in Matamoros, which borders Texas. It's one of the most dangerous cities in Mexico and our correspondent will grant reports. Something horrendous has

happened. These friends, it appears they were a group of friends from North Carolina, had come to Mexico for what appears to have been health tourism. One of them was due, we understand, to have a sort of minor cosmetic procedure and travel with her close friends. And then they found themselves right at the epicenter, the very worst of Mexico's drug war. There was a clash between what we understand were rival factions, warring factions of the Gulf Cartel in plain daylight, in the middle of the day in the city of Matamoros and they were caught in the middle of this. Taken away, it's quite common when there are firefights in northern Mexico for the drug cartels to take away the bodies. No body, no crime. In this case, of course, on finding that there were US citizens and that the full force of the federal forces in Mexico and the US would be coming down on them, those who have survived have been released and the bodies of those who died have been turned over. We'll grant reporting from Mexico City. The United Nations is estimating

that rebuilding communities in Turkey, devastated by February's earthquakes, will cost more than a hundred billion dollars. That's three times higher than the initial forecasts. At least 52,000 people in Turkey and Syria were killed and more than one and a half million people made homeless by the quakes. Our correspondent, Imogen Folks, sent this report from the UN in Geneva.

UN officials described the scenes in Turkey one month after the earthquake as apocalyptic, with entire towns flattened. Aid agencies warn that a failure to invest in recovery could have disastrous long-term consequences, lost livelihoods, disrupted education, unemployment, poverty and child labor. But so far, the UN development program's Louisa Vinton said donor support has been at best patchy. We have a new update on the number of destroyed buildings, which is 214,000. So the needs are vast, but the resources are scarce. And of the one billion dollar flash appeal that was released in the wake of the disaster, only 9.6 percent has been funded to date. But already it's clear that the damages alone will amount to more than \$100 billion.

The UN is hoping for more generosity at next week's donor conference in Brussels.

But that could be a challenge. Multiple crises from Afghanistan to Yemen to Ethiopia are competing for cash. Some, like the World Food Programme's support for Rohingya refugees, are so underfunded that food rations have had to be cut.

This week, the Red Cross warned that of its ten biggest aid operations, only Ukraine was fully funded. Imogen Folks, well let's turn to what's happening inside Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion has dramatically increased the need for rehabilitation

services across the country. The BBC has been given access to one hospital in Lviv, West in Ukraine, where they provide specialist rehabilitation for soldiers.

Since the beginning of the war, it's treated more than 11,000 patients.

From there, James Waterhouse reports.

The moment Ilya Polopenko's war ended in September.

Two soldiers pull him away from his burning tank in the southern Hurson region.

I'm a mechanic and a tank driver. I was out on a combat mission when our tank drove on a mine and caught fire. I lost consciousness. When I came around, fire was raging inside.

I had to get out quickly. I crawled to the edge of the road and my comrades evacuated me.

Ilya suffered 30% burns to his body. His right leg was amputated from below the knee.

He's now receiving specialist care at the National Rehabilitation Center in Lviv,

Western Ukraine. In this war of old, injuries from explosions or shells are the most common.

Every patient here is missing a limb. Most of them are young. They're Ukraine's fighting generation.

There is a pink sunrise emerging across the Varsly Pro River in the center of the Capitol.

And we're here to meet someone called Klib. He's a Ukrainian Marine and we last saw him bedbound with a collapsed pelvis in May last year. This morning, he's going for a jog.

My last 10 months have been an incredible adventure about love, care and my recovery.

During this time, I was taught to sit and walk from scratch. And I also learned how to run.

It is simply a miracle. Klib was injured when he and his unit came under attack while defending Mariyupol. He was taken prisoner by Russian forces before returning in a prisoner exchange.

He now spends his days helping other veterans with advice.

The doctors said that unfortunately the state of my health isn't suitable for

the Marines at the moment. And I understand. My country, my troops, the Marines need the best of the best. Deep inside, I still feel guilty I'm not in the forces. But I can be

effective even when I'm not in military uniform. Back in Lviv, Ilya is learning to look at his next chapter. His too is unlikely to be in the military. I dream about starting to walk soon.

It seems to me that the hardest stage of this treatment is behind me.

Everything is still ahead of me. I am alive and healthy.

That report by James Waterhouse. Now to the U.S. and a story that's been getting lots of attention online. Last week, the governor of the southern state of Tennessee signed laws banning drag performances in front of children. Drag queens and shows have become even more popular in recent years due to the television program RuPaul's Drag Race which is filmed around the world.

When it comes into force next month, the Tennessee Drag Law will ban performances in public places

or venues where they could be viewed by children. The statute is the first of its type to be enacted in the U.S. after a recent number of similar laws have been proposed in Republican run states.

While the BBC's Catherine Biharhanga spoke to two drag performers from Tennessee, 26-year-old Nova Stella and 22-year-old Bandage Avoo, to hear how the new law will affect their lives

and their careers. First, let's hear from Nova. This sets a precedent for other states and now other states can follow Tennessee's lead in this bill and this law and this bill is not to protect

the children. They're using that as a disguise for just hate and their small-mindedness and they're pushing their viewpoints on everyone to ensure that they kind of get to lead their way of life

and that everybody gets to follow their way of life. I'm currently living in Charlotte, North

Carolina and luckily we have a governor who's kind of more liberal, more accepting, and kind of

fight for everyone, not just one certain group, but 30 minutes away we have South Carolina and they are also trying to pass a bill very similar. Not only does this affect the livelihood of drag entertainers, this is terrifying for our trans brothers and sisters. I myself am a cisgender male but I know how sometimes I fear in certain situations with people who are homophobic and not accepting. I can only imagine the fear that my brothers and sisters in the trans community feel and it breaks my heart. The Republican state senator who sponsored the Tennessee legislation, Jack Johnson, told CNN, for clarification this bill is not targeting any group of people. It does not ban drag shows in public. It simply puts age restrictions in place to ensure that children are not present at sexually explicit performances. Vandaya, what would you say to that? Is that a fair comment that really this is about protecting minors? Girl, I have no clue who he's talking to. What people don't understand is that once you really focus on this bill and the aspects of it, especially as a trans person, so let's say that I am simply going to the market or I am simply walking in my hometown. Let's say that I have a feminine blouse on or if I have a like a single eyelash on from Walmart. If a woman or if any other parent feels that I'm a threat to their child, they have the full American right and their full state given right to pick up the phone, call the law and say a predator looked at my child when I haven't even looked in their direction. They could come to my location, cuff me, take me straight to jail without even questioning me or giving me a reason. Drag shows are just a negative thing that they can attack in the media. This is what's going to happen behind closed doors. Drag is an artistic expression. It could be anything from Mrs. Doubtfire, a classic movie that many families love and hold near and dear to their heart. I remember sitting at home as a child with my super conservative Southern Baptist family watching Mrs. Doubtfire. It could be anything of watching Disney Channel and Mickey Mouse dressing up as Minnie Mouse. Drag is an artistic expression. It is not all the time that when I get in drag that I am impersonating a female. I don't understand how the legislators are associating drag with just sexual acts because it's not that. We're there to make people smile and entertain a crowd and give them a place to feel welcome and safe. Two U.S. drag performers there in conversation with Catherine Bjarrahanga. Still to come in the podcast.

A sound of buzzing bees, but just how clever can bees be?

Concerns are ongoing in Iran about the wave of poisonings of schoolgirls. More than a thousand girls at dozens of schools have been affected by unexplained illnesses since November. Since we last spoke about this, there have been some key developments, including protests outside places of education across the country. Rudra Asadi from BBC Persian gave us the latest.

Following a protest call organised by teachers, trade unions and student trade unions, many teachers and parents or ordinary citizen came out to the streets in different cities and small towns demanding that the government takes action and stop the poisoning of the school children. And we also seen some images, the videos received by the BBC Persian. We've seen that heavy security

forces established their prisons in the streets and some people were arrested violently and there are reports that some activists were arrested as well and so it didn't go peacefully. The health ministry has confirmed that the poisoning was caused by inhaling chemical substances. That's it. Before that it was believed that it's been nitrogen that been inhaled by the school girls, but no one knows how it happens because another reason that many accuse government of organising

this incident is that because they tightly control the society. For example, during the protest, they identify using CCTV, plain clothes, officers are among the protesters. They're using drones to identify the protesters and they've made a massive arrests of the protesters and people are asking how come they cannot identify who is behind this attack, giving all these resources they have for security. Rudra Asadi from BBC Persian. Eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been blighted by conflict for almost three decades. Dozens of militant groups are operating there. One of the largest is M23. It accuses the government of marginalising and victimising people in the area. The DRC says M23 is funded by Rwanda, but that's something Kigali disputes. The group agreed to a ceasefire with the government that was due to begin on Tuesday, but aid workers say clashes are continuing. Our correspondent in the region is Richard Kaguoy. Both sides have been trading accusations and blaming each other for triggering the fighting and the people have been caught up in the course of the clashes. People have had to actually flee their homes. Villages have been deserted as people have been running for their safety, travelling and walking for kilometres to internally displaced persons settlements where now they feel they're going to be safe, but they're really, really suffering because they're not really organised settlement and so access to food and water has been an issue. And women and particular children have been the hardest hit as a result of this conflict. Alongside this conflict in the region are thousands of UN peacekeepers who are nearby. Why have they been unable to stop what's happening?

Yes, and that's really been, you know, the frustration amongst the local Congolese because they feel that the UN mission has been ineffective and that perception has grown over time and therefore

there has been discontent. In fact, not so long ago, about a month ago, you know, there were clashes between the UN, you know, peacekeepers and the local population because they felt that they have been there for more than 20 years and they have not actually succeeded in fighting, you know, the rebel groups. We're talking about more than 100, you know, armed groups that operate in eastern Congo, but it all boils down to the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission because their responsibility is not to engage in combat with armed groups, but it is protect the local population and to provide logistical support to the Congolese army. If the Congolese army struggle to contain, like you say, not just the M23, but 100 or so disparate rebel groups, if the UN doesn't have the mandate to tackle them head on, if there isn't a military solution to all of this, what is the solution? Who are the actors that could bring about some form of peace?

From East Africa, there's a regional bloc contained or made up of seven countries, the East Africa community. They have formed a regional peacekeeping force that has been deployed into a DRC. So for the areas that the M23 will vacate based on, you know, the discussions that have happened in the last one month, the areas that will vacate and moving closer to the border of Uganda, then what will happen is that the regional forces will be taking positions in different three provinces that have been affected by this conflict. So basically that's the roadmap, but military action, they largely view it as a last resort because of the implications.

The BBC's Richard Cagoy. Scientists in Britain have found that bumblebees learn to solve puzzles by watching their more experienced peers. They say the research shows that the insects are intelligent, that not only instinct but also social learning plays a large role in societies of bees, ants and wasps. Charles Haveland reports.

The experts from Queen Mary University of London devised a puzzle box that could be opened using

either a blue tab or a red tab to access a sugar reward inside. They trained groups of so-called demonstrator bumblebees to open the box using one of the two methods watched by a set of observer

bees. When the observers tackled the task, 98% of the time they used the method they had witnessed

even after discovering the alternative option. The bees therefore learned this behaviour socially, not through discovery. The scientist's broader conclusion is that innovations can spread like social media memes through insect colonies and they can respond quickly to new environmental challenges. Charles Haveland with that unbelievable story. I'm sorry. Now, it took just 36 minutes for tickets for this year's Eurovision Song Contest to sell out, although Ukraine won last year.

The country can't host the event because of the war with Russia, so the runner-up, the United Kingdom, is hosting on Kyiv's behalf. The competition is being staged in Liverpool in May and our Eurovision reporter Daniel Rosney has more. 160 million people may watch at home, but only around 6,000 have been lucky enough to get a ticket for each of the nine shows.

Fans went in line to try to back tickets for the three live shows, the two semifinals and the grand final, as well as six previews doubling up as rehearsals. Sasha was one of the lucky ones.

We are so, so excited. My credit card is crying right now, so that was one of the most stressful experiences of my life. It's the first time in 25 years the competition is being held in the UK, which hasn't yet announced its act for Liverpool, who's hosting Eurovision on behalf of Ukraine.

Which won last year's event, but there was disappointment for many fans who didn't get through, Nicola among them. And I don't know which is worse, the heartbreak or the anger.

Outside the arena, there are planned events during the first two weeks of May across Liverpool, including a simultaneous rave between Liverpool and Kiev. The UK government has set aside 3,000 tickets for Ukrainians living in the UK, displaced by Russia's invasion. And as Sam Ryder last year's UK entry said, it's Ukraine's party, we're just inviting them to throw it at our house.

That report from Daniel Rosney. Now let's return back to the wildlife and the wilds of the UK, because if you're a fan of the naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough, then there's a new series to look forward to. And for the first time, he's focusing on the British Isles.

The Wild Isles series captures animal behaviour that's never before been recorded on film, and also highlights just how vulnerable many of the species of the British Isles have become.

Justin Renner has more on the remarkable series. Welcome to a place that is astonishing. Nature in these islands can be extraordinary. It rivals anything I've seen elsewhere. It's not far, it's home. At 96 years old, Sir David Attenborough is back on the road, visiting a series of

remote locations to bring you the British Isles as you have never seen them before.

There are some stunning scenes.

Their strategy is one of surprise. Orca, killer whales, hunts seals off the coast of the Shetland Islands. It wakes up and frees, but there's a pup here too. This one sequence was filmed over three years using specialist cameras and drones. The orca takes its catch out into open water, and there shows younger members of the pod how to drown it. The imagery of British wildlife is as spectacular as anything you could see anywhere in the world, says Alistair Fothergill, the producer behind the series. He says that's because for the first time the BBC has committed the same sort of resources to filming in the UK as it would on a major international series like Planet Earth. I think very few people realise that we are actually globally important for wildlife. You know, we have more ancient oak trees in England than the whole of Europe.

We've got 50% of the world's common bluebells, a quarter of Europe's badgers, most of the world's chalk streams, and we've got globally important populations of seabirds. The series has captured animal behaviours that have never been filmed before, like our biggest bird of prey, white-tailed eagles hunting barnacle geese in flight. The goose is so heavy, the young eagle has to struggle to hold on. And there is a powerful conservation message too. We've lost 60% of our flying insects in the last 20 years, 97% of our wildflower meadows since the Second World War. Wild salmon could be extinct in the British Isles within two decades. It prompts an urgent call to action from Sir David. Almost half a million of these lovable birds come to our coast each summer. Filmed on the Welsh island of Skoma, surrounded by puffins. Here off the coast of Pembrokeshire, puffin numbers have been steadily increasing. But Skoma is an exception. So which in places Britain as a whole is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world? So what can be done? Dr Philip Wheeler is an ecologist from the Open University, who acted as a consultant for the Wild Isles series. We can make choices ourselves about what we buy, how we travel, what we eat. We can also put pressure on our politicians at local and at national level and force them to really show the leadership that's required to see big-scale visionary changes in how we manage the environment. That was the voice of Dr Philip Wheeler, ending that report by our climate editor Justin Rowlatt on the new David Attenborough documentary Wild Isles. And that's all from us for now, but there will be a new edition of the Global News podcast a little later on. If you want to comment on this one or any of the topics covered in it, do send us an email. The address is globalpodcastbbc.co.uk. You can also find us on Twitter at Global News Pod. This edition was mixed by Davith Evans, the producer was Iona Hampson, the editor, or Queen B, Kara Martin. I'm Gareth Barlow, and until next time, goodbye. This week on the podcast, Spark and Fire, composer Chris Bowers. The power of music is how quickly it can make you feel something. To compose the award-winning series When They See Us, Chris used his emotion as his North Star. I would watch that scene, the feelings were so visceral, made me ball my eyes out. On Spark and Fire, creators share their stories to fuel your creativity. Spark and Fire is a Wait What original, in partnership with the BBC. Follow us wherever you get your podcasts.