

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

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I explain it all on my LinkedIn account. Look up Emma Twin from DesoSystem.

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

I'm Robin Brandt and at 14 hours GMT on Tuesday the 26th of September. These are our main stories.

Thousands are fleeing their homes in Nagorno-Karabakh, prompting concern from the US AID chief who described the situation there as harrowing. A Saudi delegation is paying a rare visit to Palestinian officials in the occupied West Bank as Riyadh continues normalization talks with Israel. And Thailand sentences an anti-monarchy campaigner to four years in jail.

Also in this podcast, new figures suggest the sea ice around Antarctica has shrunk.

And we're with Ukraine soldiers ahead of a second winter of fighting.

What can we do? We can only fight and protect our land. I just wanted to stop and for our neighbors to go away.

We start with the exodus of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan's lightning victory there last week. Long lines of cars and trucks have been streaming out of the enclave towards Armenia itself. The authorities in the capital Yerevan say more than 13,000 people have already left their homes. That's approximately 10% of the population. More are on the way.

US AID chief Samantha Power is on the Armenian border where many are crossing and she spoke a short time ago. As I'm sure many of you have seen the trauma and exhaustion on the faces of so many of the people that one encounters here. It is absolutely critical that independent monitors as well as humanitarian organizations get access to the people in Nagorno-Karabakh who still have dire needs. Well Natalia Zotova from BBC Russian is also on the border and she sent this report.

The exodus of refugees started late Sunday night. Some arrived in the border town of Garis in ambulances exhausted too weak to walk on their own. With the few belongings they could transport families that crossed had lost all hope of ever returning. We went to the airport, everyone was collected in one spot, everyone was in a terrible state, stressed out, children crying, old people crying, hungry, cold, without enough clothes. Driving closer to the Armenian border with Nagorno-Karabakh the scale of the evacuation became clear. Vehicle after vehicle loaded with belongings and packed full of families. Russian peacekeepers we saw were helping refugees cross the border and unload in their bags. We are now in the village of Kurnizor right on the border between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. We can see the refugees that are coming and coming through

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

the border to Armenia. Here in this tent they are being registered. People are fleeing with their belongings because they are afraid they just don't believe they can be safe in Nagorno-Karabakh under

Azerbaijan rule. And they are being welcomed with basic supplies. Police handing bottles of water and biscuits through open car windows as they drive by. Aid workers told us people are in need of food, clothes and medication. The impact of one day's war and a nine-month blockade imposed on the territory by Azerbaijan. Bare essentials were scarce and many towns were plunged into darkness.

The Azerbaijanis deny it was to target civilians but say it was to prevent arms being taken into the region. This elderly lady fled with her family of six including her disabled son who crossed the border on crutches. No, there was nothing. How did you cook meals? We only picked what we had in the garden. Potatoes, beans, we didn't have bread, flour, nothing. Dr. Tatyana Agnesyan works with doctors and volunteers of Armenia who are providing support to those who've just arrived.

People are malnourished from being in blockade for nine months. They are crushed because they have lost their homes. We see people who come in unsuitable footwear and just the clothes they had on. Armenia says that it will take in all the refugees from Karabakh potentially up to 120,000 people. In the 1990s a different ethnic group fled Nagorno-Karabakh. The Azeris haven't lived alongside ethnic Armenians for centuries but forced to leave after the region decided to secede. They headed to Azerbaijan where many of them still live in temporary and often dismal conditions. For these Armenians today it's unclear what the future holds. Their priority today is sheltering themselves and the very little belongings they have from the rain. Natalia Zitova reporting from the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. Now for the first time in three decades a delegation from Saudi Arabia

has arrived in the occupied West Bank. The group crossed overland from Jordan. Saudi's non-resident ambassador was due to meet with the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas who reiterated

that no Middle East peace agreement would be possible until Palestinians were granted full rights. Our Middle East analyst Mike Thompson has this report. This is the first Saudi Arabian delegation to travel to the occupied West Bank since the signing in 1993 of the landmark Oslo Accords. It's led by the Gulf Kingdom's non-resident ambassador to the Palestinian territories Nayef Al Suderi who crossed overland from Jordan. After being received by officials in Ramallah he's to meet with the Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas. The visit comes as U.S. brokered talks continue over the potential normalization of ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Riyadh had recently appeared to soften its insistence that any deal must include the creation of a Palestinian state. Washington has also called for the revival of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. U.S. officials have warned that any agreement expected to include a defense pact with Washington and a civilian nuclear program for Saudi Arabia is still some way off. Mike Thompson, in Thailand the law that protects the monarchy there from criticism is back in the spotlight. A lawyer turned activist has been jailed for four years for insulting the country's royal family. What's known as the Lese Majeste law makes some criticism of the monarchy a crime. Our correspondent Jonathan Head is in the capital Bangkok. I asked him about

human rights lawyer Arnon Nampa who's been sentenced. It's the first conviction for Lese

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

Majeste since unprecedented protests against the law three years ago. The youthful demonstrators came on the streets and for the first time called for reforms to the monarchy. Arnon Nampa was the first man to do this. He did it at a protest when he was actually dressed up as Harry Potter and at that stage the protesters were focusing their anger against the military-backed government and various other human rights abuses and he said actually if you want change in Thailand you have to talk about the monarchy. The monarchy is officially above politics but in practice a very powerful and wealthy institution and that broke the taboo. Young people after that came out with more and more bold demands that the monarchy should be changed, that the discussion should be

had. Those protests petered out and Arnon is among 257 people. It's a record number who've been charged

under the Lese Majeste law and as the courts have worked through all the various other charges these

protest leaders face he's the first one to be jailed. There'll be many others and he faces a total of 14 charges under this law and many other charges in addition to that. I want to ask you in a minute about the broader political environment and how it's changing but just quickly on the sentence four years is that harsh in comparison to others? It's not and I wonder whether the courts were very conscious of the enormous attention on this verdict. There were a lot of diplomats there, a lot of media there. Also you know even the fact that journalists were allowed to observe this trial a very limited number were allowed in is unusual. Usually Lese Majeste the trials are held in secret journalists aren't allowed to see them and the sentences can be absolutely savage. There's sometimes

many decades the record sentence things about 87 years although it's routinely cut in half if you plead not guilty. And the broader political environment it's changing is it you sense that there is more talk despite the draconian prospect of sentencing here but more people are talking about the monarchy its role and possible reform? Absolutely and I think the point about this seeing this verdict today is the law is still being enforced precisely because people want to talk about it. Remember we had an election just a short time ago in Thailand where a young party won the largest share of seats calling for a discussion about the monarchy many of its MPs are facing Lese Majeste charges now they were blocked from office exactly because they said this law should be amended. So the conservatives are holding the line we have a now conservative government that probably won't allow much discussion but there's no doubt that among younger ties they do feel the monarchy should be talked about and that this law should be changed.

Jonathan Head reporting Russia is trying to get back on the United Nations main human rights body its membership was suspended after the invasion of Ukraine last year there'll be an election at the UN next month our diplomatic correspondent James Landau has seen the case that Russia is making for a return to the Human Rights Council. After the invasion of Ukraine the United Nations voted overwhelmingly to suspend Russia from its human rights council but now Russia wants to get back on to the UN's main human rights body and is campaigning hard ahead of an election among UN members next month. In a position paper obtained by the BBC Russia promises what it calls adequate solutions for human rights issues this despite another UN report yesterday outlining Russian war crimes in Ukraine. Diplomats say despite this Russia could be elected onto the 47 member council in a boost to its global reputation it is competing with Albania and

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

Bulgaria for two seats allocated to eastern and central Europe and diplomats claim Russia is offering countries arms and grain in return for votes the foreign office of the UK strongly opposed Russia's candidacy the Russian mission at the UN was approached for comment. Well in Ukraine itself the summer counter offensive is drawing to a close without having made the breakthroughs that many Ukrainians and their supporters had hoped for. The army has regained some ground but faces a constant threat from Russian drones which also continue to attack targets deep inside Ukrainian held territory. The BBC's Mark Urban got access to one brigade fighting in the east and saw how they are bracing themselves for a long war with no end in sight. In this war there are the hunted and the hunters. The Ukrainians say their Russian enemy has far more drones which makes camouflage and remaining unseen vital. So we were expecting a fire mission within five minutes and then word came down on the radio to stand down because a Russian drone has been sighted somewhere near here and that's really very typical of what's been happening a constant battle of wits a deadly battle of wits. We watched the artillery of the 24th Mechanized Brigade as its own drones searched for targets then the order came through that they had one. Once they'd fired we were told to leave fast. A shell could soon be heading back in our direction. So let's go. We got an inkling of the stresses they're under but soldiers live under it permanently. No date has been set for their demobilization. It's extremely hard to live with that. Just how hard we saw at the medical center where one casualty was being brought in. It was described as a panic attack and even our presence was setting people on edge. We've had to leave the medical center because the doctors were worried that our presence at the medical center might make it a target. But of course just as this brigade is being hunted it's also finding its own targets. We joined the drone company as it hunted Russians and they can respond immediately by dropping various kinds of munitions. A new machine called an FPV can target the Russians even when they're taking cover inside buildings and trenches. Here we have an assortment of FPV drones so those are different manufacturers. Some are Ukrainian. Two years ago would you have ever imagined you would be doing this? Oh no no god say it now but what can we do we can only fight and protect our land. I just wanted to stop and for our neighbors to go away. It's this ability to see so much more and target it some call it the transparent battlefield that's made it so hard to take ground here. So much so that the men in this brigade are preparing for the autumn and winter ahead. Mark Urban reporting. Still to come on the Global News Podcast the app that helps blind people envisage the world around them. There is a street with parked cars. There is a building with a sign that reads Darko. There are also trees lighting the sidewalk in the pedestrian walking in the distance. Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure threaten the essential services we all rely on. That's why public institutions like schools, hospitals and government agencies across the country are partnering with Google to keep their data safe and secure because when organizations like these run on Google Cloud they're defended by the same AI-powered security that protects

all of Google. Explore how Google is keeping more Americans safe online than anyone else at safety.google.com forward slash cyber security. Selling your car to Karbana is as easy as pie? Sure all you have to do is enter your license plate or vin. As easy as a stroll in the park. Okay then just answer a few questions and you'll get a real offer in seconds. As easy as singing. Why not? Schedule a pickup or drop-off and Karbana will pay you that amount right on the spot. As easy as playing guitar. Actually I find that kind of difficult. But selling your car to Karbana is as easy as can be. Visit Karbana.com or download the app to get an instant offer today. Welcome back. Now China has hailed an agreement with its neighbors Japan and South Korea that the three countries leaders will meet at a convenient time just after a rare summit of senior diplomats to kickstart trilateral exchanges. The foreign ministry in Beijing said the three sides also agreed to hold a ministerial meeting in the coming months. All three nations are major trading partners but they have a troubled history with Japan and South Korea reaffirming their tilt towards the US more recently. I spoke to our sole correspondent Jean McKenzie and began by asking her what is the significance of these plans? Well they actually used to sit down fairly regularly Robin but this kind of trilateral meeting was suspended back in 2019 actually because of disputes between South Korea and Japan but what we've seen over the last year is South Korea and Japan really working to mend their own relationships but at the same time really strengthening both of their alliances with the US. But in all this their relationships with China have deteriorated. So we had this landmark summit just last month between the United States, South Korea and Japan where actually the three went further than we even expected and they criticized China for what they said was its reckless behavior in Asia. So there has been this kind of real block forming between these three countries and so one South Korean official said to me just ahead of this meeting that actually this is now their attempt for South Korea and Japan's attempt to pull China that bit closer to them again. Now would this be to the benefit of all three nations or is this kind of meeting and the significance possibly within it at the behest of the Chinese or at the behest of Tokyo and Seoul? I mean who's got the most again? I think they all have something to gain here and I think they wouldn't be sitting down here today if they didn't. You know it's easy to say well actually Tokyo and Seoul need Beijing because Beijing is such a huge trading partner for these two countries. I mean 25 percent of South Korea's trade is with China and actually if you take Hong Kong into it it's nearly 35 percent but a China's economy is slowing at the moment and so these three countries need to lean on each other economically but there also is some security at play here as well. I mean if you look at what we've seen in Northeast Asia recently with as I said this block between South Korea, Japan and the US you've also got this kind of block forming between Russia, North Korea and China all be a slightly more fractious block but look South Korea doesn't want this pairing because well if anything it believes that China has this influence over North Korea and so if it wants to it can help and keep North Korea in check. G. McKenzie reporting. France is pulling out of Niger after a two-month standoff following a coup there. Niger is the fourth former French colony in the Sahel to go through a military uprising in just three years. The French ambassador has left the country and French troops are now preparing to leave after President Emmanuel Macron said Niger was no longer interested in

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

fighting terrorism. Niger is demanding the troops leave in what it calls a negotiated framework and by mutual agreement. Mayani Jones got rare access to Niger and she sent this report. So we're now 11 hours into a 15 hour journey from the southern city of Zindia near the border of Nigeria to the capital Nyami. Now this would usually be a very short less than an hour long plane journey but because of shortage of fuel in the country and the closure of the airspace we're having to do this by road driven past oil fields uranium deposits mines all of this is part of the wealth of this country which despite having so many natural resources still remains one of the poorest in the world. In Nyami hundreds of protesters are listening to Friday prayers outside the French military base some have been camped here for weeks they accuse the French of pillaging the country's natural resources and of failing to stop the terrorists. In his sermon Imama Abdulaziz Abdullah Amadou calls for patience he explains that just as divorces between spouses take time so will Niger's divorce from France he blames perceived French hypocrisy for the anger here. Why is Emmanuel Macron now saying he doesn't recognize our authorities when he's recognized junters in other countries like Gabon and Chad that's what has made us angry and we think France takes us for idiots. Also at the prayers is general Abdul Azuman Haruna the new governor of Nyami appointed by the junter a month ago. The coup started as an internal power struggle but the junter has benefited from the anti-French sentiment. He says the people of Niger want a prosperous proud and sovereign country and that outsiders should respect their will. When I ask if the junter can keep his country safe from terrorists he replies that Nigerian forces have always protected their people and can do so without foreign partners. Niger was the west's strongest ally in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel. Both France and the U.S. have over a thousand troops here now like a neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso French troops are being kicked out but those opposed to the coup believe France's departure could be dangerous. Paris-based Idrissa Waziri is the former spokesperson of the post president Mohammed Bazoum. In the fight against the terrorists France is a key partner that provides most of the intelligence that helps us beat the terrorists trying to attack Niger. But many Nigerians are frustrated with the lack of progress in the war on terror. Adamazou Kaleni Maiga lives in a quiet middle-class neighborhood in Yame with her two children. She's originally from Tilaberi, one of the regions worst affected by jihadi violence. She tells me her mother's cousin, a village chief, was assassinated by terrorists seven months ago. They tracked him down and killed him by slitting his throat. Do you think that the French have had any impact at all when it's come to a helping stop some of this violence? A French army hasn't had any success, she replies. She adds that every year the situation gets worse. There has been some progress. Last year, terror-related deaths in Niger fell by 79%. It's not clear if the French helped but observers fear political instability could stop this progress and we also saw evidence that freedom of expression has been squashed in the aftermath of the coup. We're on our way to the airport in Yame in the same way that we've struggled to report as freely as we can because the junta follows our every move. I also get the sense that many people here can't speak as openly as they'd like to even if they did oppose the junta

or wanted France to stay a little longer. There certainly isn't a condition here for them to be able to tell us that. As democracy comes on the threat in the Sahel, its future looks uncertain. Mayeni Jones reporting from Niger. Latest figures show that the sea ice around Antarctica has shrunk

sharply. The ice expands and contracts with the seasons but satellite imagery from NASA has shown that its winter coverage in the area around the South Pole this year was just over a million square kilometers less than the previous worst year. That's equivalent to the size of Egypt. Here's Jacob Evans. NASA's snow and ice data center has been keeping a regular record of the sea ice around Antarctica since 1979 and now new satellite data has found at the maximum extent

the Antarctic ice sheet grew to this year is the lowest that has ever been recorded. It fell to below 17 million square kilometers for the first time breaking the previous record seen in 1986 by more than 1 million square kilometers. Scientists say the sea ice also never fully recovered from its summer shrinkage and this signifies the continuation of a marked downward trend that began in 2016.

But why is this important? Sea ice has frozen ocean water. It develops and shrinks entirely in the sea so unlike when glaciers melt the loss of sea ice doesn't have a drastic impact on sea level rise. However sea ice is incredibly reflective and when it melts in its place comes very dark ocean water. This absorbs more of the sun's heat and scientists fear this may have larger consequences on the Antarctic continent and its ecosystems. Now we're going to end with a double chunky look at artificial intelligence. First cases of AI creating songs which mimic the voices and styles of existing artists have raised concerns about copyright law and intellectual property theft but the boss of the streaming giant Spotify has told the BBC there is a place in the industry for music created by AI provided he says it does not directly impersonate or mimic existing artists. Daniel X said that would be unacceptable. He's been speaking to the BBC's technology editor Zoe Kleinman. You have so-called deep fake AIs where someone's impersonating some

famous artist etc and our view is obviously that is not positive and we believe that say something in the Drake weekend case that Drake and weekend should be able to decide what kind of content they want to put out in the world what they stand for. So you have no immediate plans to ban AI generated content from the platform? No we have no immediate plans and in fact it wouldn't even surprise me that if we look at the top chart of Spotify today that there's a legitimate use of AI done by artists and we would allow for them and then there's the one where it's clearly someone trying to steal someone's name or likeness or even infringe on someone's IP at which point we would say that is not okay that is not what we stand for and we would take that down.

You've been very critical of Apple's practices haven't you in the past and you still are a critical voice. Our beef is really around allowing for a level playing field not fair playing field. Apple decides what innovation goes and doesn't go it taxes all innovation on the internet on this point and it doesn't have to follow the same rules themselves and so all what we all we're asking for is they can charge whatever fee they would like so long as it was possible for us to not be in their store and download the app onto the iPhone anyway. Apple would say that what you're paying

for is the security that it provides and this enormous audience of iPhone users that it has

it's giving you access to a marketplace that nobody else can access and and would argue that it's worth it. What would you say to that? Four billion consumers around the world and probably 80% of UK consumers the primary way they're accessing the internet is through their smartphones and the primary way they're accessing the internet is through apps on smartphones and so this is the internet at this point and that's why from a principal standpoint it's really important for me it's an important business issue for Spotify but I believe it will be very important for the future innovation and for other developers. Spotify has invested a lot in podcasting you had some big names you had the Abamas you had the Duke and Duchess of Sussex they released 12 podcasts

in two and a half years was that worth 18 million pounds? We thought new innovation was needed to happen here we thought we can come in and offer a great experience that both you know makes consumers

very happy and allows new creators new avenues to build new podcasts and we've succeeded with that

now in part of that we also sign lots and lots of new podcasters to this medium and the truth of the matter is some of it has worked some of it hasn't we're learning from those and we're moving on and we wish all the ones we didn't renew with the best of success that they can have going forward. That was very diplomatic. I'm getting better and better at it so they would tell me.

I mean there are artists aren't there who say they earn you know a fraction of a penny per stream of their tune on Spotify is it is it difficult to make a living on your platform?

Well it's difficult overall I can safely say there are more artists than ever that's being successful on Spotify than ever before in history music however I'm also empathetic because there's also more people trying to make it in music than ever before in history too and you need something extraordinary to break through and be heard and we're doing our part to expose more music to more people. Spotify's boss Daniel Eck speaking to Zoe Kleinman and as promised we are going to stay with AI to wrap up which so many of us are wondering if it's going to help us in our lives or maybe threaten us. Well here's an example of something very helpful to people who are blind or visually impaired. A new app that uses AI to map out the area immediately around someone has been tested by our North America correspondent Sean Dilly who is blind. I'm standing in the northwest quadrant of Washington DC and I want to find out what's in front of me so we're going to ask the virtual assistant BMI AI to take a picture. So that's what it sounds like but how much of a difference can it actually make? Well Sean has been talking to my colleague Justin Webb. It's game changing for me. I was sitting in a cafe that I did not know in Washington DC the other week. I took a random picture to play with the new technology as I've been one of their beta testers. It not only read the menu items to me and broke the items down but it told me where the restrooms were what the layout of the cafe is but then even in the home environments you can take a photo of your cottage pie or whatever it is you might want to be cooking. It won't only just read you those instructions you can ask it questions like how long do I cook this for or how much salt is in here. It may seem small scale but actually if you think about it it's pretty enormous because at the moment there are an awful lot of tasks that people who are blind and visually impaired for instance might need to get help doing that might be from family members that might be depending on other health conditions. Social care people are always going to need to be involved and there's no notion that there wouldn't be but who knows what this language model is capable of

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / Thousands flee Nagorno Karabakh, prompting international concern

doing to help people out in life generally. What about its involvement of other people who are just around in what it's doing? There are and have been privacy concerns indeed during the testing phase of this app. Stop working for about a week and a half when there was any photo that included a human face within it there are questions there will continue to be questions in terms of what about the people who don't know they're having their photographs taken in the first place and then even beyond that and this is something that all AI developers are aware of what is it allowed to say and for example I mean I took a photo of myself in the studio a little while ago very good AI actually it has to be said because I said am I overweight it's no you appear to be abnormal bills I mean I'm not sure whether it's entirely right but you know you take the point for example is it allowed to say that someone's you know a bit rotund and is it allowed to say that you aren't Sally as a woman there are all these things that we societally would have genuine questions about and because it the way AI's work they dig into the internet they dig into blogs they dig into any text they can get hold of absolutely if a for example a child takes a photo of themselves and says am I pretty the danger is that it could draw its information from a more malevolent source and say something altogether less pleasant.

Sean Dilley a trim Sean Dilley I think on the streets of Washington DC and that's all from us for now but there will be a new edition of the global news podcast later if you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it you can send us an email the address is globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk you can also find us on x formerly known as Twitter at global news pod this edition was mixed by Lewis Allsop and Gabriel O'Regan the producer was Lipica Pelham the editor is Karen Martin I'm Robin Brant until next time thanks for listening and goodbye. Cyber attacks on critical infrastructure threaten the essential services people rely on that's why institutions like schools hospitals and government agencies are partnering with Google to keep their data safe and secure learn more at safety.google/cybersecurity oh wow oh my I'm so excited thank you that's the sound of Casey getting a random act of helpfulness we just told him the helpful SoCal Honda dealers will be replacing his old manual wheelchair with a brand new power wheelchair and we paid him for sharing that story on the radio and we can help you too with a great deal on a reliable award-winning Honda like the 2023 Accord to find the helpful SoCal Honda dealer near you and to submit a random act of helpfulness for someone you know visit SoCalHondaDealers.com