

## [Transcript] Global News Podcast / Urgently needed aid sent to Nagorno-Karabakh

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I'm Valerie Sanderson and in the early hours of Sunday the 24th of September these are our main stories. What now for the Armenian civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's takeover of the disputed territory. Ukraine says Russian Navy commanders were among those hit in Friday's missile strike on the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet in occupied Crimea.

Also in this podcast the long-term consequences of COVID. What we found was that five months after discharge patients who were previously hospitalized were at three times more likely to have abnormalities involving multiple organs compared to patients without COVID-19.

And how is French cinema managing to survive with only one in 50 films covering its production costs?

It's less than a week since Azerbaijani forces captured the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in a lightning operation. Since then there have been increasing concerns for the welfare of the territory's ethnic Armenian population. Many of them were displaced in the fighting and have taken refuge in the main city Stepanikert. The local authorities say the terms of a ceasefire are being implemented including the delivery of humanitarian aid and the disarming of Armenian separatists. But food and medicine are running low and power cuts are frequent. Media access to the

region has long been tightly controlled by the authorities but the BBC has been allowed in under the close watch of an Azerbaijani military escort. BBC Russians Olga Ivshina sent us this report.

This is the first time journalists have been allowed into Karabakh since the start of recent hostilities. We're currently in Shusha, a key point in the area. It sits on a mountain which overlooks several strategic roads and towns. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has taken tens of thousands of lives. Azerbaijan military has told us they're currently in control of Hankendi which Karabakh Armenians call Stepanikert and consider their capital so it's very important.

However, Azerbaijan has provided no details, no evidence and this is as close as we are allowed to go.

The biggest question now is what happens to Karabakh Armenians who have lived here for several decades.

An Azeri official has just told me that they will only target armed rebels and they're ready to provide security guarantees for the civilians. We're currently conducting mine cleaning. We also established camps, temporary camps. In these camps we can provide food, water, electricity and those

heating up to one thousand people in each camp. However, there is a lot of mistrust on both sides. Destiny of these people is now de facto in Azeri hands. Olga Ivshina. The BBC has also spoken to Sirenish Sargasyan, a journalist who lives in Stepanikert and she says the situation there is dire. The thing is that we can't feel safe for our lives in this situation. We can't have any kind of hope if I even want to leave. Who will allow me? Sorry, but I don't believe that this talk about humanitarian

corridor which will provide us, it's not possible in this condition. Azerbaijan has a green light from this international community, from Russia, from UK, from other European countries and of

course

from US. I got more from our caucuses correspondent Rehan Dmitri who's monitoring the situation from

Georgia. In Stepanikert, Valerie, where most people are concentrated now, I'm talking about thousands of people who were displaced by this latest military offensive from Azerbaijan. They are now in Stepanikert in basements, in shelters. Some pictures have emerged from Sirenish whose voice we just heard. She's managing to post some photographs and those pictures show no electricity,

very little food, lots of uncertainty, fear and really, really desperate kind of situation for people because on top of that there are lots of people who are still missing and the local human rights ombudsman earlier today reported that they have received 600 calls from people who are still looking for their relatives, including children. And do we know how many separatists have been disarmed and how many remain? Well, the process of disarmament is ongoing. There's no specific number of how many were disarmed, but today the Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense published a list of military equipment that has been seized so far, so this process is ongoing. Now, there's a US senator, Gary Peters, who has visited the border. He is saying that international observers are needed

to monitor the situation there. Is there any evidence of that kind of international monitoring yet? Not yet, but there are more and more calls for international monitors because of course there are fears of ethnic cleansing. This is something what Armenia has been saying for a long time. And given the history of this conflict that three years ago when Armenia and Azerbaijan fought a full-scale war, and you know, we live in a digital age, so horrible videos showing the mistreatment of Armenian prisoners of war that was all happening three years ago, so the fears that these atrocities

might be repeated are justified, I think. Rehan Dimitri. Ukraine has claimed that Russian commanders

were among those injured in Friday's missile strikes on the Black Sea Fleet headquarters in occupied Crimea. The head of Ukrainian military intelligence said the attack killed at least nine people. Danny Ibrahim has more details. Evidence is building that Russia's naval headquarters sustained significant damage. More video footage appears to show a follow-up missile striking the already damaged building, causing a large explosion.

Kirill Obradov told Voice of America that two Russian generals, including one involved in operations in the Zaporizhia region, had been badly wounded. Ukraine's special forces say the strikes were timed to target a meeting of the leadership of the Russian fleet. Neither source has provided evidence for their claims, which have not been independently verified. The Sevastopol area has come under renewed attack this morning. Russia's top official there said debris from a missile shot down by air defences had fallen near a pier. He's also tried to calm residents, warning people to stop sowing panic and, in his words, delighting our enemies.

It's clear from his post on social media that some in Sevastopol have had problems accessing bomb shelters. Danny Eberhard. What are the long-term effects of COVID-19? The pandemic began three and a half years ago. Now a new study of 259 people who were hospitalised with the infection found they were far more likely to show damage to major organs than people who never caught it. Professor Betty Riman of Oxford University is the lead author of the study, published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine Journal. What we found was that five months after discharge, patients

who were previously hospitalised were at three times more likely to have abnormalities involving multiple organs on MRI compared to patients without COVID-19. The biggest impact was seen in the lungs, but we also found abnormalities involving the brain and the kidneys.

And were these people displaying symptoms of long COVID, and if so, what were they?

So we did not specifically study patients with long COVID, but we know that approximately 70% of patients who were previously hospitalised may continue to have ongoing symptoms five months from infection. So the majority of our patients were not completely recovered from the infection. And I guess one important thing is that many of the things you picked up in these MRI scans were without symptoms, so people wouldn't even know they had a problem.

Yes, that's correct. People could have these changes and not have any symptoms. One organ, however, where there was a link was the lung. So if there were changes involving the lung, people were more likely to experience chest tightness and cough. But it was surprising that we couldn't see a similar association in other organs. Now, these were people, as you say, that were hospitalised, so fairly severely ill. What about the many people who were pretty ill at home for several weeks? What can you learn from this study of anything about those people?

It's possible that some of the findings that we're seeing in the post-hospitalised group may be seen in a small number of people who did not come into hospital. That said, there have been follow-up studies of individuals with long COVID who did not require admission to hospital, and these studies have undertaken multi-organ MRI scans. And it seems like the pattern of changes were different. Those who required hospitalisation had a higher prevalence of lung MRI abnormalities.

And what are the implications of your findings for health services around the world?

There are two important implications from our work. The first is that people who continue to feel unwell after they were hospitalised from COVID-19 do need a more comprehensive checkup where the doctor pays attention not just to the lungs, but also to the brain and the kidneys.

The second is that we have identified some risk factors for multi-organ changes and abnormalities, and these include older age and comorbidities. So individuals from this vulnerable group should stay up to date with the COVID-19 vaccination programme available to them.

Do you think the problem of long COVID is being underestimated or are we across it?

I don't think we have a good idea yet of the real burden of long COVID across the community because of reduced efforts to study this.

Professor Betty Rabin Think of French films and you may conjure up a vision of Brigitte Bardot or Alain Delon in all their 1960s glory. But a report by the French body that examined the value for money of projects and organisations in receipt of government funding

has revealed that just 2% of present-day French films make enough money at the Global Box Office to cover their production costs. In fact, the industry survives thanks to generous state subsidies.

Adam Sage is the Times Paris Correspondent and Caroline White asked him when French films really were at their zenith.

The years of Truffaut, 60s, 70s, maybe the Golden Age, maybe Eric Cromer as well in the 1970s. These films such as Le Cade son Coup or something like that were really the highlights of French cinema.

La Piscine without Alain Delon, I mean these were the films that marked a generation of French filmgoers and no doubt outside France as well.

Are French films losing their magic because it seems from those figures that French cinema goers are not smitten anymore? I mean a few French films are certainly still retain the magic. The last pan d'or winner at the Cannes Film Festival at Anatomédian Shoot is doing very well. But an increasing number of films are being made year after year and an increasing number of those films are attracting almost no one to see them. We're talking about an awful lot of films that have been massively subsidised that are really not finding a public to watch them.

And yet this is something that certainly some French film directors have said is a good thing. Yes, that's right. I mean this is an exception on Couturelle, the cultural exception, which is that you have a cinema industry that is heavily subsidised that doesn't need to worry about profitability and box office the same way that Hollywood does that can explore intellectual and artistic and cultural paths. And a lot of people in France in the French cultural sector would say this is a positive thing. I mean it is true that the system of subsidies has kept a fairly lively cinema sector going in France. When French people go to the cinema they do tend to watch more often French films than say the British watch British films or the Italian Italian films. So that's absolutely true. But there is certainly a worry amongst let's say people who are less interested in culture, more interested in public finances about the amount of money that's going into the cinema and the amount of money that's going into cinema to make films that are really not attracting anyone to speak of. And does this worry the French themselves or do they think it is worth it simply to carry on producing the films? No, I don't think that French are waking up in the middle of the night worrying about this to be honest. It hits the headlines in May at the Caen Film Festival because Justine Trié, who is the director of the winner, Annette Amidoune Choudre, she used her acceptance speech to say that the French system was being threatened by President Macron's quote-unquote neo-liberal government. Now I don't see any evidence that it is being threatened or indeed that President Macron really has a neo-liberal government. But it did put the issue into the news agenda and there was a debate about if the government said nonsense, you're getting lots of money and you're being very ungrateful. And I think that a number of French people probably agreed with that. But then it came and went and no one seriously was saying we should

pull the plug from under the cinema industry and stop the subsidies that they're getting.

It's a very, very marginal point of view in France.

And that was Caroline White speaking there to Adam Sage in Paris.

The 19th Asian Games have been opened by President Xi Jinping in China in front of a stadium packed with

tens of thousands of spectators. The event, which takes place over the next two weeks, has cost billions of dollars, with sporting teams from North Korea, Afghanistan and Syria all involved. The BBC's Jason Lee has more details.

It's the biggest sporting event in Asia. It's sort of like the Olympics of Asia for those who are not familiar with it. And the Hangzhou Games this year is also the biggest sporting event hosted by China in more than a decade. That's because in terms of the scale of the competition, it's even bigger than the Winter Olympic Games held in Beijing last year in the capital because it was under strict COVID zero policy then. This year more than 12,000 athletes from all 45 national Olympic committees in Asia and the Middle East will participate competing in 40 sports. Now, these include some of those that originated from the region and which are not included in the Olympic Games, such as the Dragon Boat Racing and the Chinese martial arts Wushu.

It's the first time, isn't it, in three years that a team from North Korea is attending. Why not? Well, in recent months, we've seen some signs that North Korea might be slowly opening up. It's borders since it sealed them three years ago in wake of the pandemic. So last month, we saw a group of North Korean Taekwondo athletes. We believe them to be Taekwondo athletes crossing the border into China. And this was the first time that Pyongyang sent a sports team abroad since 2020. So North Korea sending its athlete to the Hangzhou Games might be the continuation of that. Another point I want to highlight is North Korea being one of the most isolated countries in the world has been quite keen on sports diplomacy. So by participating in the Games, North Korea might be signalling it's ready to pursue that again. And of course, Beijing is a close ally of North Korea and being neighbors, Pyongyang might have thought that there was less political as well as logistical pressure to send its team to Hangzhou.

Well, you've brought up politics. It's interesting looking at the guest list because there are people there, political leaders who certainly would not be invited to sporting events like the Olympics, would they? Definitely, that's true. So one notable example is the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. It's his first visit to China since the war erupted in Syria in 2011. So it's another sign that the Syrian President who's been shunned on the world's diplomatic stage for more than a decade might be slowly being welcomed to the world stage after he attended the Arab League Summit earlier this year in Saudi Arabia.

Jae Sung Lee. Still to come on the Global News Podcast?

It's exploitation beyond all logic. Women's bodies are reduced to objects that can be rented for nine months. Is Italy about to ban people from traveling abroad to have children through surrogacy? This weekend sees the beginning of the new academic year in Iran, but it's been overshadowed by controversy. Several teachers' organizations have issued statements criticizing the atmosphere in schools and the pressure on their members. A year after the start of anti-government protests which prompted a violent crackdown by the security forces, teachers have also expressed their own happiness about the alleged poisoning of students in schools across the country. Our Middle East analyst, Sebastian Usher, told me more about the protests and what's happening in Iran's schools.

I mean it's fair to say that the young generation in Iran were really at the forefront of the protests for ones which were set off by the death of a young Iranian Kurdish woman, Musa Amini, in the custody of the Moranti police just over a year ago. And we've seen in the universities, we've seen a lot of professors have been sacked there, a lot of students were barred from attending courses and it seems that that has moved towards schools where much younger pupils as young as 14, 15 were going out on the streets, lots of young girls who were essentially throwing off their headscarves at the height of the protests back in the spring of this year and really making their voices heard, trying to say that the generation that they're part of no longer accepts for rules and regulations, but have been in place for four decades since the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Those protests have basically calmed down as far as people going out on the streets are concerned. There's still defiance, quite widely, but people express online also to some extent in public by not wearing headscarves. So this is an interesting moment in the schools to see just how strongly the authorities will react in this new academic year. I mean I've seen a report that the Minister of Education has said that a very large number of thousands of school principals are going to be replaced and that they essentially want people running the schools who



are very much in line with what the authorities believe and in preserving the rules and regulations that have been in place for so long. We've seen a number of teachers who have been suspended, some have been arrested. That's not just to do the protests over Masa Amini and the controversy over the headscarf. It's also that they've been long-running strikes by teachers as there have been by other professionals that their living standards are being degraded as inflation rises. So you know this is a major issue. Add to that also the school poisonings that happen that still haven't been resolved properly. So this will be an interesting year to see where this all goes. Sebastian Usher. In Italy a law has been proposed by Prime Minister Georgia Maloney's right-wing government which would criminalise people who travel abroad to have children with the help of a surrogate. The gay community says it's a deliberate attempt to stop same-sex couples having children

but this has been denied. It's likely the law will be passed making surrogacy via foreign countries a universal crime as it's known in Italy. That would carry a fine of a million dollars and up to two years in prison. A correspondent Sophia Petizta has this report.

I grew up here in Italy. This is a country where the influence of the Catholic Church has always been strong. Gay marriage is illegal and same-sex couples have fewer rights than in most of Western Europe. Surrogacy, artificial insemination or adoption are all against the law here. So if LGBT couples want to have a baby their only option is to go abroad.

Like Mauro and Maurizio they've been together for 20 years. Their twins Giorgio and Luisa are eight months old. They were born in America through surrogacy. We considered to adopt but in Italy it's impossible to adopt for a gay couple. To be son of a universal crime is a stigma on our children. What exactly is a universal crime? It's a crime so serious that it's prosecuted even if committed abroad. But that is usually human trafficking, pedophilia or war crimes. It seems odd that surrogacy, which is legally many countries, would fall under this category.

I wanted to speak to someone in government about all of this. So I've come to the Italian parliaments to meet Carolina Varchi, the MP who drafted the surrogacy bill.

Surrogacy needs to be discouraged and opposed. It's exploitation beyond all logic. Women's bodies are reduced to objects that can be rented for nine months. I pointed out to her that many see her bill as an attack on the LGBT community. Absolutely false. Most people who use surrogacy are heterosexual. This is a law that protects women and their dignity. We're on our way to meet two men who are expecting a baby through surrogacy. They are really scared of what could happen to them and their baby. So they've asked us not to reveal their identities.

If Carolina Varchi's bill is passed before their baby is born, they could face severe consequences. It's put a huge strain on them, doing a conversation one plays the piano while the other one paints. I'm afraid that our child won't have his parents because their parents are in jail.

So do you feel like you're having to seek political asylum? Yes, I'm feeling like we have to be ready to escape as quick as possible and being exiled for having done something which is actually normal without exploiting anybody. Exploitation is the accusation often used against these couples, but they say they have a great relationship with their surrogate. A few weeks ago she sent them a letter and a teddy bear. Congratulations on your baby boy. We are so grateful you chose us to go on this journey with you. This is a very special bear. It was written like a hug it and we were like why should we hug it? Then we hugged it and there was a sound indeed of the heartbeat. Wow that's amazing, no? This is a symbol of everything of the journey so we're not doing anything bad. That report by Sofia Batica. In the latter half of the 18th century

when he was just 13 years of age Kwobna Atoba-Kagwano was enslaved in what is now Ghana in West Africa

and shipped to the Caribbean island of Grenada. He was eventually taken to England where he was granted his freedom becoming a campaigner against slavery. Kwobna was baptized in St James's church

in London almost exactly 250 years ago. To mark the anniversary the church has unveiled specially commissioned paintings in its entrance by an artist from the Caribbean and Martin Benout went along to have a look.

So I'm in St James's church in Piccadilly in the heart of London. St James's is a beautiful 17th century church and a haven of peace which was built by the architect Sir Christopher Wren and I'm with the Trinidadian artist Che Lovelace. Che tell us about these pieces of work that you've done here. The paintings depict a kind of idea of baptism using my own environment and experiences

as a Trinidadian, somebody in the Caribbean. I've used the idea for washing at the river as the first panel. So we see two people actually washing themselves in the river and some very colorful plants around them, leaves and lots of greens and blue and turquoise. Yeah I wanted to bring that to London and into this space. What does the next painting show? Describe it for us. This one is a female figure. She's submerged underwater swimming. She is very calm. Of course again I saw this immersion in the water as also symbolic of baptism but also symbolic of the middle passage across the Atlantic. The third panel I wanted to include something that was musical and that involved bodies and movement. I thought the drum actually when I first came to St James church there was a drummer and I thought that would be a good way to kind of connect with the church

as well as connect with the traditions of dance and music. And moving on to the fourth and final panel what do we see on that? I wanted this one to be devoid of human figures so I wanted it to feel almost like a visitation painting, visiting something divine, the hummingbirds and the flora, the coconut trees. They're just the strength and majesty of nature I guess. Also the native Trinidadian Indians held as a belief that the spirits of ancestors resided in these particular birds. How did it feel when you've got this commission? That was very moved. Every person of color especially would connect with the history of the slave trade and the story of Africans in that time. And we're also joined by the rector of St James's. Hello yes my name's Lucy Winkett. Could you tell us a bit more about Ottobar Pugwano's life? The only date and time that we can ascribe to his life is the 20th of August 1773 which was his baptism here at St James's church Piccadilly. He was 16 years old according to the baptism register and he'd been kidnapped aged 13 from West Africa, traffic to Grenada, worked in a plantation and then was brought here to London and was freed. And why did you commission this work? Why did the church commission this work? We realized that the 250th anniversary was coming. We also realized that Ottobar Pugwano is the least

well-known of a group of abolitionists in London at that time called the Sons of Africa who worked with William Wilberforce who is very well known. And so we thought that one of the best ways to do that was to put a plaque in the church which we've done but we also thought that wasn't enough. His book is called *The Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery* and it was published in 1787 and it's an extraordinary condemnation to the whole practice of slavery. So he's the first African to call for the total abolition of slavery throughout the world and we wanted to say we must

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recognize our complicity with the past and St James's church like every other church of our generation would have had in its congregation at the time that Pugwano is baptized people who are benefiting from the transatlantic slave trade. The Reverend Lucy Winkett ending that report by Martin

Venard. And finally a fishing town in northern Japan has decided on a unique way to shift huge numbers of scallops it's unable to export to China because of a seafood import ban.

Maureen Hokkaido is donating 100,000 portions of the prized shellfish to schools as will Leonardo reports. Beijing's Japanese seafood ban brought in after the release of wastewater from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant last month appears to have produced an unlikely beneficiary. Students at several schools across Japan are soon to be treated to a taste of fine dining as the prized Hokkaido scallops hit their lunch menus. The shellfish have been languishing for a month in freezers in the northern town of Mori after the loss of the country's biggest international seafood customer. The town plans to use emergency government money to fund the school offer. It's just one of many Japanese fishing communities reeling from the blanket Chinese man despite being hundreds of miles away from where the water used to cool the damage reactors at Fukushima is slowly

being discharged into the sea. Tokyo has announced a package of support for fisheries which are also

paying high storage costs for their products as they seek new customers abroad. The government is continuing to try to convince its neighbors that the UN approved for Fukushima water release is safe. The Prime Minister from Yorkshida last month released a video of himself eating raw fish from near the nuclear plant while the environment minister was recently photographed on a surfing trip in

the area. Will Leonardo reporting and that's it from us for now but there'll be a new edition of the Global News podcast later. If you want to comment on this podcast or the topics covered in it send us an email. The address is [globalpodcast.bbc.co.uk](mailto:globalpodcast.bbc.co.uk). You can also find us on X formerly known as

Twitter at Global NewsPod. This edition was mixed by Davith Evans. The producer was Carl Josephs and the editor as ever is Karen Martin. I'm Valerie Saunderson and until next time bye-bye.