

News in brief

**Brazil's Bolsonaro blocking critics on social media: HRW**

Human Rights Watch accused Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro

Thursday of violating the right to free speech by blocking critics on social media, where the far-right leader maintains a heavy presence. At least 176 journalists, lawmakers, influencers, ordinary citizens and others deemed critical of the president have had their access to his accounts blocked, mostly on Twitter, the New York-based rights group said in a report. Bolsonaro "is trying to rid his social media accounts of people and

institutions that disagree with him and turn them into spaces where only applause is allowed, part of a broader effort to silence or marginalize critics," HRW's Brazil director, Maria Laura Canineu, said in a statement

China passed a sweeping privacy law aimed at preventing businesses from collecting sensitive personal data yesterday, as the country faces an uptick in internet scams and Beijing targets tech giants hoovering up personal data.

**China passes tough new online privacy law**

Under the new rules passed by China's top legislative body, state and private entities handling personal information will be required to reduce data collection and obtain user consent.



**UK, US sanction seven more Russians for Navalny poisoning**

Britain and the United States sanctioned seven Russian officials on

the first anniversary of the near fatal poisoning of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, which the West blames on Moscow. The individuals – all members of Russia's domestic security service the FSB, successor to the KGB – are accused of planning or carrying out the Aug. 20, 2020 nerve agent attack. They now face asset freezes and travel bans under the sanctions.

**The death toll from an attack on civilians and the military in northern Burkina Faso has risen to 80 people, the government said in a statement.**

**Death toll from Burkina Faso attack rises to 80**

The attack occurred on Wednesday when Islamist militants raided a civilian convoy that was being escorted by military police near the town of Arbinda, the latest in a spate of attacks across West Africa's Sahel region this month. Fifty-nine civilians, six pro-government militiamen and 15 military police were killed, the government and the military said on Thursday. The initial death toll was put at 47 on Wednesday.



The Ugandan government said it had ordered more than 50 non-governmental organisations to suspend operations, a major escalation of its efforts to tighten control over civil society. The 54 groups affected include the country's most prominent rights organisation, Chapter Four, as well as charities, religious, environmental and electoral democracy groups. The shutdown was ordered "with immediate effect", the National Bureau for NGOs, part of the ministry of internal affairs, said in a statement.

**COVID-19: Countries worst affected**

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	38,242,977	643,207
2 India	32,392,506	433,998
3 Brazil	20,494,212	572,733
4 Russia	6,705,523	174,485
5 France	6,557,356	113,103
6 UK	6,429,147	131,487
7 Turkey	6,177,092	54,107
8 Argentina	5,116,803	109,841
9 Colombia	4,880,516	123,901
10 Spain	4,758,003	83,004
11 Iran	4,616,516	100,810
12 Italy	4,471,225	128,683
13 Indonesia	3,950,304	123,981
14 Germany	3,858,609	92,451

**Global tally**

211,237,288

**Deaths**

4,423,645

**Recovered:**

189,110,075

**New cases**

432,167

**New deaths**

+7,224

Figures as of closing

**Middle East**

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	285,831		16,647		235,317	33,867
Saudi Arabia	541,201	+458	8,458	+9	527,189	5,554
UAE	707,236	+1,070	2,014	+2	687,644	17,578
Kuwait	407,878	+226	2,401	+2	400,148	5,329
Oman	300,914		4,020		289,450	7,444
Qatar	230,442	+221	601		226,996	2,845

**US evacuation flight had record 823 passengers**

AFP | Washington

The US military transport aircraft shown in a now-iconic photograph jam-packed with Afghans fleeing the country's Taliban takeover held a record 823 passengers, the Pentagon said yesterday.

The US military's Air Mobility Command said the original estimate of 640 Afghans, seated on the hard floor of the giant C-17 Globemaster III -- already more than double the normal capacity -- omitted children passengers.



A US Air Force C-17 Globemaster III flies Afghans fleeing the Taliban

The count was made based on the number of seats filled on the buses delivering the passengers to the C-17 and left out all the children seated on laps, it said on Twitter.

Ultimately, the aircraft, which was headed to Qatar, "safely transported 823 Afghan citizens from Hamid Karzai International Airport Aug. 15, 2021. This is a record for this aircraft," it said.

The command did not say how many crew were on the flight.

According to the publication Defense One, the pressure of Afghans trying to leave on Sunday forced the crew to make the

call on departing, even though the passengers were not manifested.

"We have women and children and people's lives at stake, it's not about capacity or rules and regulations -- it's about the training and the directives that we were able to handle to make sure we could safely and effectively get that many people out," Lieutenant Colonel Eric Kut, who was mission commander for the flight, told the journal.

The transports are usually used for heavy equipment or a few hundred troops carrying large packs of their own weapons and belongings.



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LIEUTENANT COLONEL ERIC KUT, MISSION COMMANDER FOR THE FLIGHT

**UAE to temporarily host 5,000 Afghans at US request**

Reuters | Dubai

The United Arab Emirates has agreed to host 5,000 Afghan nationals to be evacuated from their country for 10 days on their way to a third country at the request of the United States, the Gulf Arab state's foreign ministry said yesterday.

"The evacuees will travel to the UAE from the Afghan capital of Kabul on US aircraft in the coming days," the ministry said in a statement carried by state news agency WAM.

The foreign ministry told



UAE flag flies over a boat at Dubai Marina, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Reuters they would be hosted for 10 days.

The UAE has so far facilitated the evacuation of 8,500 people

from Afghanistan on its aircraft and through its airports, it said.

The announcement came after US officials told Reuters Washington was expected to announce that countries in Europe and the Middle East have agreed to temporarily shelter people evacuated from Kabul as its base in Qatar reached capacity.

A Qatari official told Reuters the Gulf Arab state was "continuing our efforts to evacuate people from Afghanistan. Additional flights are scheduled during the upcoming days."

**Facing try to**

Chaos mounting again

**Western powers under fire over intelligence, evacuations**

Reuters | Kabul

Foreign powers sought to hasten evacuations from Afghanistan yesterday after reports of Taliban reprisals, including against people who had worked with US-led forces or the previous Western-backed government.

More than 18,000 people have been flown out since the militants took the capital Kabul, according to transatlantic alliance NATO, but Western governments are facing criticism for not anticipating such a chaotic exodus or helping enough.

Thousands of desperate Afghans clutching papers, children and some belongings still thronged Kabul airport where gun-toting Taliban members urged those without travel documents to go home. In and around the airport, 12 people have been killed since Sunday, NATO and Taliban officials said.

Such was the turmoil that no nation really knows which plane its citizens are on, while some people were caught in Afghanistan on family visits, a Dutch minister said.

"As of today, those who may be in danger have no clear way out," UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson Shabia Mantoo said, urging

**Forest soaked with sculptures grow u**

**The newly opened Museum of Underwater Sculpture in Cyprus consists of 93 sculptures by renowned artist Jason deCaires Taylor**

CNN | Nicosia

The artist behind the world's first underwater sculpture park has just unveiled his latest subaquatic project -- a spectacular sunken forest located off the coast of Perna beach in Ayia Napa, Cyprus.

The Museum of Underwater Sculpture in Cyprus (Musan), which cost 1 million (\$1.1 million) to bring to life, is made up of 93 sculptures by Jason deCaires Taylor, whose previous work includes the Molinere Bay Underwater Sculpture Park in Grenada and Mexico's Isla Mujeres National Marine Park.

Taylor aims to put the spotlight on "rewilding our natural spaces" and "reforesting areas of barren habitat" through the installation, which explores the relationship between man and nature.



**Human impact**

Some of the figures featured include huge trees weighing up to 13 tons as well as children pointing cameras at shapes depicting the human race while playing hide and seek.

"I tried to incorporate as many references to climate change and habitat loss and pollution as I could, because those are really the defining issues of our era," Taylor tells CNN Travel.

"I'm kind of hoping that it leaves the visitor with a sense of hope along with a sense that the human impact isn't always negative. That we can reverse some of

the things we've done. "But I also hope that it instills some other messages about holding genes and corporations responsible. It's really about safeguarding the future of the younger generation."

Each of the sculptures, which were lowered below the surface by crane, were made with inert pH neutral materials that attract marine life and have been placed at different depths, so that the biodiversity of the area may be "enriched" by their presence over time.

**Submerged art**

"They're designed to sort of

let natural growth settle on the substrate," explains Taylor. "After five or six days, I could already see a thin film of algae on each of the heads of the sculptures, which have these quite complex habitat areas, and they were already full with little juvenile fish."

"So that was very, very encouraging. I'm really looking forward to going back in a couple of months time and seeing how it aggregates marine life."

Taylor spent two to three years working on Musan, which had been due to open last year, but the launch was delayed due to the global pandemic.

"We started building the pro-