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[00:00:18.660]

I'm Jonathan Savage. And in the early hours of Sunday, the 16th of August, these are our main stories. The Belarus president Alexander Lukashenko says he's asked Russia for support as anti-government protests gained momentum. South Africa eases coronavirus restrictions after one of the world's longest lockdowns and international leaders marked victory in Japan day on the seventh anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

[00:00:46.110]

Also in this podcast, Colombia's poorest residents are 10 times as likely to be hospitalized with covid-19 as its richest.

[00:00:54.420]

And if I get on some trumped face mask nowhere, I just got something.

[00:01:00.240]

Will Donald Trump supporters stand by him despite his handling of the pandemic? We will not give up our country to anyone that was the defiant message from the Belarus president, Alexander Lukashenko, as he faced a sixth day of anti-government demonstrations across the country. The protests were sparked by accusations that the authoritarian leader rigged last week's elections to extend his 26 year rule. And the movement has been picking up steam. On Saturday, thousands of people gathered in the capital, Minsk, for the funeral of a man who died during the protests.

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Our BBC correspondent Abdel Jalil Abda Rasoulof was there.

[00:01:46.270]

The death of Alexander Tarkovsky on Monday fueled anger here and has mobilized more people to come out onto the street. He became a symbol of struggle against President Lukashenko regime at Pushkin Sky Metro Station, where Mr. Tarkovsky died. Thousands of people lay flowers in his memory and chanted, We will never forget. We will never forget.

[00:02:10.450]

The crowd is getting bigger and bigger every minute. People keep coming. This is truly unprecedented for Belarus. In 26 years of being in power, Mr. Lukashenko has never faced such a challenge before. We are sure everything will change. We believe in our victory. That's why we will come in the streets every day, every single day.

[00:02:37.000]

Alexander Lukashenko spoke to Russia's president Vladimir Putin, and both sides expressed confidence that the situation would be soon resolved. Observers say that Russia's support will be key for Mr. Lukashenko to hold on to power.

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But rallies that are happening across the country may be a sign that Alexander Lukashenko has reached the point of no return.

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Abdel Jalil Abderrazak of well, President Lukashenko has blamed the protests on foreign agitators, and he told state TV that a brigade of air assault troops will be moved to Belarus as western border as a precaution. He also said Vladimir Putin has offered him comprehensive help to ensure security. But will the Kremlin really get involved? My colleague least said asked the Russian journalist Konstantin Agat, who's covering the situation from Estonia.

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Belarus is critically important not only for Russia as such, but for Putin's regime, because the fall of Europe's last dictator may sound the while before last death toll for the Russian regime. And in this respect, it seems that for Mr. Putin to let Mr. Lukashenko fall is the last thing you would want. On the other hand, intervention in Belarus, military intervention, Belarus will produce huge consequences for Putin. First of all, it will not be immensely popular in Russia.

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And he's always fishing for, you know, domestic support for that. Secondly, it will be probably more sanctions, certainly, which is much more important. There's going to be resistance and probably from the Russian army, it's not going to be a walkover.

[00:04:17.990]

So although I think that Mr. Putin still maybe contemplates some intervention, Belarus, the current strategy seems like that was agreed between him and Mr. Lukashenko is to wear the protest down by the time let them lose steam and then probably see what can be done.

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And if they don't lose steam, does he have a clever option that he can somehow try to make this his own?

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As you say, it has a rather unfortunate echo for himself and his own position in Moscow.

[00:04:52.860]

Not immediately. The fall of Lukashenko, which is very, very close and which is very, very probable, is a very bad thing for Putin, who presented himself ever since his invasion of Syria in 2015 as the world's number one authority on countering a regime change and bailing out dictators. If you can't bail out a dictator who lives well a few hundred kilometers from Moscow, then what is worth in this role?

[00:05:19.040]

Konstantin Agot the situation in Belarus is being watched closely by the international community. The European Union has already taken steps towards laying sanctions. And while President Lukashenko has rejected foreign offers of mediation, one human rights observer said members of his government are ready to break ranks. And a U.S. Marine as a United Nations special rapporteur in Belarus.

[00:05:42.110]

Within the ruling administration, the bureaucracy in the security forces, they are we have evidence of this already, people who are conscious of the fact that the level of violence is just unlawful and that it has to be stopped and avoid an escalation spiral that could end up in a civil war or the intervention of Russia. And therefore, I believe we should try and talk to these people within the administration who are able to defect and defend both the democratisation of Belarus and its sovereignty and a marine of the United Nations.

[00:06:22.100]

South Africa has announced that from Monday, a ban on the sale of alcohol and tobacco products will be lifted as part of its coronavirus lockdown.

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Re president Cyril Ramaphosa said all indications were that the country had reached the peak of covid-19 infections. Restaurants and pubs will be allowed to return to normal business, and while restrictions on international travel will remain in place, people will be able to travel between provinces. Andrew Harding has more details from Johannesburg.

[00:06:50.810]

This is a big moment for South Africa as one of the world's longest, toughest lockdown's is

significantly eased, praising his government's response to the pandemic. President Ramaphosa spoke of a new phase and of signs of hope. And he has a point. The official death toll here is 11000. But a quick, aggressive response has enabled most hospitals and provinces to contain an outbreak many feared would overwhelm the nation. The economic price has been devastating. The president Ramaphosa spoke of hardship and hunger for millions and warned it would take years to rebuild the economy.

[00:07:27.230]

But many South Africans still sporting face masks in public will be relieved. The alcohol and tobacco industries, which had bitterly condemned a controversial ban on all sales, will now be anxious to make up for lost revenue.

[00:07:41.900]

Andrew Harding Saturday marked the 75th anniversary of V-J Day. That's victory over Japan, which signalled the very end of the Second World War. And it was commemorated with a series of. Events around the world honoring those who fought in the Far East and the U.K., the Prince of Wales led British commemorations of the allied victory over Japan. The prime minister, Boris Johnson, joined him at a service of remembrance in central England, attended by veterans of the conflict from across the Commonwealth.

[00:08:10.790]

Around 100000 African troops fought for Britain against the Japanese in the Far East, mostly in Burma. They become known as the Forgotten Army. But the role is finally being acknowledged. Private Joseph Hammond from the British colony of Gold Coast now Ghana, was drafted into the British army in 1943. He fought in the River Irrawaddy battles early in 1945.

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We were colonial subjects, you know. So when your boss is in trouble, you have to have your boss, who was 18 years very young. And, you know, normally these things when you are young, there is nothing like fear, nothing like Seattle. I give all my heart and everything. I imagine you were it was terrible. It was so ferocious. They had wanted to cross the river to Haram, but they realised that we would massacre them.

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So they changed their strategy and plan and started moving southward towards the capital, Rangoon. We followed them and there was a serious battle. It wasn't a joke at all for them. And then we reached Mabu, a river crossing. Sometimes we are short of food, you know, three or four days, no food. We rely on our biscuit and connectedness and we wait until the plane drops our food and ammunition. Then we continue to fight.

[00:09:40.040]

Private Joseph Hammond. So how was this anniversary marked in Japan? Japan's Emperor Naruhito expressed what he described as deep remorse for his country's actions during the war. But the Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, marked the occasion by sending an offering to a controversial war shrine in Tokyo, the Yasukuni Shrine, as our correspondent Rupert Wingfield Hayes explained from the site.

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Well, it's a busy scene here outside the shrine as it is every August 15th, perhaps a little less busy than normal years. And that, of course, is because of covid-19 still many thousands of people coming to pay their respects. The thing about the Yasukuni Shrine is it is where they have, after the war, enshrined the spirits of the two and a half million Japanese who died during the war, both soldiers and civilians. And so this is the obvious place, the only place really for many Japanese people who lost members of their families to come and pay their respects on what is effectively Japan's national commemoration day, Remembrance Day.

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But it is also a very controversial place. And that's because in the late 1970s, they quietly enshrined

the spirits of the 14 senior members of the Japanese wartime government, the men who after the war were put on trial by the allies and found guilty of war crimes and executed in the fact that those men, including Hideki Tojo and others, are commemorated here, honored here, makes this a very, very sensitive place, particularly for countries like Korea and China, who watch very carefully to make sure that senior Japanese politicians do not come here and pay their respects.

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But for members of Prime Minister Abe's cabinet did come here, they say they came in a private capacity, not as members of the government. Nevertheless, in Beijing and Seoul, this will be seen as a, you know, another reminder of their belief that the Japanese ruling party really does not face up to Japan's war crimes and does not want to face Japan's dark history.

[00:11:38.540]

Rupert Wingfield Hayes. American FBI officials are arriving in Beirut to help investigate the massive explosion that left more than 170 people dead and 6000 injured. Last week, Lebanon's political elite have faced a massive backlash for allowing thousands of tons of explosive material to be stored at the city's port. The country's government resigned following widespread protest, but there are calls for more pervasive change to Lebanon's power structure. David Hale, who's a senior U.S. diplomat, warned that the country cannot return to an era in which anything was allowed to happen at its ports and borders.

[00:12:15.470]

America has been a friend of Lebanon for over two centuries, but as the dozens of young activists and volunteers I met so bluntly demanded, there can be no bailout. When we see Lebanese leaders committed to real change, change in word and deed, America and its international partners will respond to systemic reforms with sustained financial support. But we cannot and we won't try to dictate any outcome. This is a moment for Lebanon to define a Lebanese, not a foreign vision of Lebanon.

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Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of the Shia Islamist party Hezbollah, has dismissed the FBI's participation as a way to exonerate Israel if it were found to have been involved.

[00:12:57.190]

Still to come in this podcast, preventing the transfer of coronavirus and enclosed public spaces, you need outside air coming in that doesn't have virus. An air conditioner can be something that is recirculating indoor air.

[00:13:10.390]

It depends on the kind of air conditioner you have and why a restaurant in China asked its patrons to weigh themselves before ordering.

[00:13:21.400]

The US presidential campaign is picking up pace and covid is bound to be a major factor in the November election. The U.S. has the worst outbreak in the world, and President Trump's response to the pandemic has been widely criticized. But how much is that really fracturing his support at a local level? Jane O'Brien went to the swing state of New Hampshire to test the water win win.

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That's it.

[00:13:46.030]

A rare sight in this virtual election season. A politician on the campaign trail.

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How are you? Good to see you. I'm Corky.

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Corky Messner is a Republican challenger for a Democratic Senate seat in New Hampshire, a state President Trump lost by a whisker in 2016 and where his endorsement still carries clout.

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I am proud and honored to have received President Trump's endorsement. And it is a good thing I don't view it as a liability at all. I view it as a very, very good thing. And and I would tell you that, you know, the polls are starting to turn some now. And, you know, 90 days in politics is an eternity.

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How are you doing through all the pandemic stuff we're holding on? How are you?

[00:14:35.530]

New Hampshire has so far escaped the worst of the pandemic with just over 400 deaths. That's one reason why so many voters support the president's focus on reopening the economy.

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And over here is where we keep some of our big losses. And here we have a three and a half hour gain. And normally he had been eaten by now, but we've had to close extra days due to lack of help.

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So covid isn't closing down the lobster trap. Owner Billy Cuchillo can't get workers locally and foreign students who normally plug the gap can't travel, prolonging it all and doing all this stuff and giving out the money to everybody.

[00:15:13.040]

I mean, even the BP loans. I mean, that's been great for business for a lot of businesses. But eventually someone got to pay that back. And it's unfortunate. It's going to be people in the future, kids that aren't even able to vote right now.

[00:15:24.610]

Democratic candidate Joe Biden enjoys an overall lead in New Hampshire, but President Trump's support among Republicans remains above 80 percent, even as some have questioned his response to the pandemic.

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It's been inconsistent. Sometimes it's been overreaching, sometimes in some ways. So how he manages now for the next two months going into the general election cycle in earnest is going to really make a big difference for voters.

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Ovide Lamontagne is a lawyer and a Republican. There's no question that this is going to have a negative impact on his presidential re-election chances for a couple of reasons. One is the economy itself. It's really been dealt a very serious blow. And for most voters, they are pocketbook voters. And an economic hit like this is bad for who's in office, particularly if it's the president. Do you know how you're going to vote?

[00:16:17.740]

Yes, I'm going to vote for the president. 90 days is a long time in American politics. And the balancing act between containing the virus while safely reopening the economy gives ample room for missteps on both sides.

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I think if I get on some Trump face masks nowhere, I just got something. I want advice on that report from Jane O'Brien.

[00:16:42.820]

We now turn to the covered pandemic in Latin America, where, according to official numbers, Colombia has the fourth highest infection rate behind Brazil, Peru and Mexico. But aid workers have said those figures likely represent only a fraction of the cases in Colombia. The capital, Bogota, has seen a surge in infections in recent weeks, and officials say residents in poorest areas are 10 times as likely to be hospitalized compared to residents of the wealthiest areas. Listo that spoke to Elizabeth Dickinson, a senior analyst for Crisis Group in Colombia, an NGO which works to prevent and resolve deadly conflicts beginning in March.

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Actually, we had a lockdown that was very strict and that lockdown has never lifted. It has relaxed lately. But today in Bogota, as we're increasing our caseload and what they've done is it started to move the quarantine into sort of a sectoral method. So they look at the neighborhoods that are most affected and lock those down very strictly while leaving other parts of the city more more flexible so that people can continue to work. The effect on the economic situation here has just been devastating.

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There are many people here who work to eat every day. So a quarantine really is something very serious.

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Is that one of the reasons why this terrible statistic? Residents in the poorer areas of Bogota, 10 times as likely to be hospitalized as those in wealthier areas.

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I think that's right. I mean, I was speaking actually the other day to someone in one of these areas that's even more impoverished in the capital. And they put it to me in a way that I thought was very telling. They said this is the moment in our society when all the problems that existed already float to the surface and they triple the number. So Colombia is a very stratified society. The inequality here is very high school parts of the city with no paved roads, with very little access to public services and other parts of the city that are that are very wealthy and it is in those areas but don't have access to public services where there is overcrowding in housing, where people don't live in proper sanitary conditions, that they just can't avoid going out and working for the very fact that they will need that money and that daily labor in order to eat.

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Elizabeth Dickinson speaking to the BBC's Lyse Doucet. Most of the current thinking says the transmission of covid-19 occurs mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing and through contact with contaminated surfaces. Masks do a decent job of keeping the virus from spreading into the environment. But if an infected person is inside a building, inevitably some virus will escape into the air. This has huge implications for people working in office spaces. So how can we ventilate indoor spaces to make them safe during this pandemic?

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Dr. Shelly Miller is a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and she's been working on this very issue.

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There's really two ways to approach this. The first is to make sure that the respiratory aerosol doesn't get into the environment. So that's why we wear masks and we reduce occupancy indoors by social distancing. But once the aerosol does get into the indoor environment, you then have to treat it with engineering controls, which has ventilation by opening your windows and then supplementing ventilation with filtration if you need to. And it can be quite effective. One of the issues is that it depends on the weather.

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And so if there is a temperature gradient or wind, then there will be lots of good ventilation. But if it's

really stagnant and there's not a lot of driving forces to have the movement of air, then it can be a lower ventilation rate. And then you would probably like you need outside air coming in that doesn't have virus as an air conditioner can be something that is recirculating indoor air or it can just be blowing the air around. So it depends on the kind of air conditioner you have.

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You know, when you blow just blow indoor air around, that's always not the best.

[00:20:47.780]

The chairman of the Republic of Ireland's National Tourism Authority has resigned after it emerged he traveled to Italy for a holiday. Michael Colley went ahead with a planned family trip despite government advice to avoid non-essential travel abroad. From Belfast, Richard Morgan reports.

[00:21:04.340]

Folch, Ireland has been encouraging people to holiday close to home this year to help rebuild the tourism and hospitality industries which have suffered due to the coronavirus pandemic. Following a newspaper article revealing, Michael Crowley is currently in Italy. Several political parties said his position was untenable. In a statement, he said he had resigned with great regret and did not want the issue to distract from the work being done to rebuild the Irish tourism industry. Italy is currently on a green list of countries, which means people do not have to self isolate upon their return to Ireland.

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But the government's advice remains that people should avoid all non-essential travel.

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Richard Morgan a China has a long history of national awareness campaigns, and this is a bit of a sidebar. In the 1950s, Mao Zedong launched the four Pece campaign where citizens were ordered to kill flies, mosquitoes and rats and billions were killed. But Moe was also convinced that sparrows were consuming huge amounts of seed, so ordered their destruction as well. What people did included banging pots and pans to scare them into flight and keeping them there until they dropped to Earth.

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Dead from exhaustion. Right away from the sidebar, back to the story of Beef Restaurant in the central Chinese city of Changsha has apologised for its overzealous response to a national campaign, this one against food waste, after encouraging diners to weigh themselves and then order food recommended to them based on that figure. More from our Asia-Pacific editor, Celia Hutten.

[00:22:41.240]

This week, China's powerful leader kidnapping triggered a national empty plate campaign. He said the amount of food that was simply thrown away in China was shocking. And he urged everyone to adopt the attitude that food was scarce. When Mr. Si talks, people jump into action in China and many restaurants quickly fell into line, encouraging groups of diners to always order one fewer dish than the number of people at the table seeking to prove their loyalty to the ruling Communist Party.

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Others suggested each group should deduct two dishes. However, one establishment in the city of Changsha went even further than that. Large scales were placed at the busy restaurants doorway and customers were asked to enter their weight into a mobile app that would then recommend menu items accordingly. Millions of Chinese social media users instantly attacked the idea, with many questioning why a person's size would have anything to do with the possibility they'd clean their plate. Others told the restaurant it simply needed to make its food taste better if it wanted to avoid waste.

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The restaurant owners were forced to eat humble pie, announcing they were deeply sorry. Celia Hart.

[00:23:56.720]

And that's all from us for now. But there will be an updated version 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 Global Podcast at BBC, Dot Seo Dot UK. I'm Jonathan Savage. Until next time. Goodbye.

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