

Global Health Newsletter

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Americas

Gang Violence in Haiti

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Greater than half the population lives below the poverty line and the unemployment rate has reached 60 percent. Haiti has suffered from natural disasters, political instability and humanitarian relief mismanagement all placing a great strain on the country and its citizens.

Over the past year there has been an increase in the number of gangs surrounding the capital. Gang violence has targeted women and children for rape, torture, killing and kidnapping. It is estimated that 200 armed groups control 60 percent of the capital. This has caused an exodus of thousands (over 96,000) of people from the city to find safety. Cassendy Charles, the Mercy Corps' Emergency Program Manager, states: "In Port-au-Prince, a lot of young people have joined gangs because they don't have food or money. Some left the southwest peninsula after the earthquake looking for new job opportunities in the capital. Once they got there, they couldn't find a job but needed to send money home to support their families so they joined a gang." Because of the control the gangs have assumed, victims of their crimes are too afraid to report these crimes for fear of retribution. Therefore, there are little consequences for the actions of the gangs. Families are placing their children in orphanages hoping that they are better able to protect them from violence and gang recruitment.



<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/31/americas/haiti-gang-violence-intl/index.html>

Further reading

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/haitis-troubled-path-development>

<https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/haitis-spiraling-gang-violence-threatens-cut-capital-and-hamper-earthquake-recovery-efforts>

<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigation/2022/11/14/Haiti-gang-violence-women-gender-based-violence-war-humanitarian-needs>

Middle East/Northern Africa

Protests in Iran

On September 16th Jina Amini died under suspicious circumstances. The official claim by the Iranian government was that the 22 year old died of a heart attack at the police station and fell into a coma prior to her arrival to the hospital. The Guidance Patrol (the religious morality police of Iran's government) arrested Amini for not wearing a Hijab properly and wearing tight pants. However, there are reports that she was beaten in police custody, witnessed by other women with whom she was detained. Amini's CT scan demonstrated skull fractures, hemorrhage and cerebral edema making it more likely that she died from intracranial pathology. In response to her death country wide protests began.



<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/10/iran-protests-rage-overnight-after-mahsa-amini-commemoration>

In reaction to the protests, the Iranian government implemented shutdowns of internet access. Despite this, the number of tweets and retweets for the hashtag #MahsaAmini exceeded 80 million by September 24th. After two months the protests are still occurring and over 300 people have been killed. A court in Iran just issued the first death sentence to a person arrested for setting fire to a government facility in protest. More than 2,000 people have been charged so far with participating in riots any many more are awaiting sentencing.

Undercover Iranian government officials visit hospitals to look for injured protesters to arrest. Doctors are required to report all patients who are protesters to the government. As a result, many of the physicians create patient charts under false names to protect their identities. This policy has caused injured protesters to treat their wounds at home for fear of arrest. There are even reports that ambulances in Tehran transport injured protesters to police stations instead of hospitals, preventing them from receiving medical care.

Further reading

<https://www.euronews.com/2022/11/02/iran-protests-what-caused-them-who-is-generation-z-will-the-unrest-lead-to-revolution>

Asia/Pacific

South Korea Distributes Trackers for the Elderly with Dementia

South Korea has an aging population with 16 percent of the population 65 years and above. As a result, the number of people with dementia has also increased.

The South Korean government has given over 2,500 location trackers for people with dementia. The device is worn on the individuals wrist and allows caretakers to monitor the patient's location by checking an app. If the patient wanders further than a designated area an emergency call will notify the caretaker. The goal is to help prevent demented patients from wandering and getting lost. This initiative is a part of a partnership between the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the National Police Agency and SK Hynix (a local chip maker) who provides the funding.



<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/asia/south-korea-distributes-location-trackers-dementia-care-centres>

Further reading

<https://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/asia/south-korea-distributes-location-trackers-dementia-care-centres>

Sub-Saharan Africa

Weatherproof Shelters for Sudanese Refugees

Climate change has caused an increase in extreme weather such as floods. In 2021, these floods and high winds destroyed many shelters in Tunaydbah and Um Rakuba refugee camp in Sudan. With the destruction of these shelters refugees living in these camps became shelter less once again. Two women, Madhn Enday and Azmera Glmedn, trained engineers in Tigray who became refugees themselves due to fighting in their hometowns engineered durable shelters in the refugee camps. Since 2021 they have helped build over 600 of these shelters. Medhn is a forewoman and Azmera the site supervisor for the construction of the tukuls. Tukuls are round homes with a pointed thatched roof often seen in parts of eastern Africa. These new more durable shelters are sponsored by the organization, MedAir. These women have also trained 40 women to help with construction of the homes.



<https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2022/human-cost-of-extreme-weather-in-sudan/>

Further reading

<https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/stories/2022/10/63467e654/refugee-engineers-help-build-weatherproof-shelters-fellow-refugees-sudan.html>

<https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2022/human-cost-of-extreme-weather-in-sudan/>

Europe

Clinical Trials for Artificial Blood Underway

The UK is started the first clinical trials to determine the safety of synthetically grown blood. It starts with a normal donation of one pint of red blood cells (RBCs). Magnetic beads are then used to extract red blood cell stem cells which are grown in the lab and guided to become red blood cells. This process takes about three weeks and starts with a half a million stem cells which then turn into about 50 billion red blood cells. Of these 50 billion RBCs about 15 billion can be transplanted.

The goal of this is not to replace human blood transfusions but to produce rare RBCs for people who have difficult blood types to match who need transfusions, such as patients with sickle cell disease. In addition, the goal is to produce RBCs that last longer in the human body than a native RBCs with a lifespan of about 120 days.

The current trial has taken 10 healthy volunteers and injected them with 5-10ml of radioactive tagged blood four months apart. Two volunteers have already been injected with their first dose of blood.

Further reading

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-63513330>



<https://holycrossleonecenter.com/blood-transfusions-during-surgery>

What's New at Northwell's Center for Global Health?

Tyler Nghiem Travels to India

One of SIUH's own residents accompanies Northwell's Center for Global Health to India. Tyler spent three weeks traveling the South of India. The first week he accompanied the Center for Global Health and toured various healthcare facilities, met with different stakeholders to help determine future relationships and partnerships between the various institutions. He then spent two weeks in the Christian Medical College of Vellore's Emergency Department. He shadowed in the ophthalmology clinic, visited both the old and new campuses and saw community health outreach programs. He met with various stakeholders to discuss potential research collaboration between Northwell and CMC Vellore. His time spent will help create the foundation for future residents to travel to India on a global health rotation. Tyler was a great asset and we are very happy he was able to travel to India and hope that more residents are inspired to participate as well.

