

# WHO: Covid's Global Health Staff Death Toll Up to 180,000



The World Health Organization says 80,000 to 180,000 healthcare workers may have been killed by Covid-19 up to May this year. Photo by Getty Images

NEW YORK (The Guardian) -- The World Health Organization says 80,000 to 180,000 healthcare workers may have been killed by Covid-19 up to May this year, insisting they must be prioritised for vaccination.

A WHO paper on Thursday estimated that out of the world's 135 million health staff, "between 80,000 to 180,000 health and care workers could have died from Covid-19 in the period between January 2020 to May 2021".

The WHO chief, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said healthcare workers

needed to be immunised against the disease first, as he slammed the global inequity in the vaccine rollout.

"Data from 119 countries suggest that on average, two in five health and care workers globally are fully vaccinated. But of course that average masks huge differences across regions and economic groupings.

"In Africa, less than in one in 10 health workers have been fully vaccinated. Meanwhile, in most high-income countries, more than 80% of health workers are fully vaccinated."

He added: "We call on all countries to ensure that all health and care workers in every country are prioritised for Covid-19 vaccines, alongside other at-risk groups."

Tedros said that more than 10 months on since the first vaccines were approved by the WHO, the fact that millions of health workers still had not been vaccinated was an "indictment" on the countries and companies controlling the global supply of doses.

Annette Kennedy, president of the International Council of Nurses, said the organisation grieved for all healthcare workers who had lost their lives – "many needlessly, many we could have saved".

The WHO wants each country to have vaccinated 40% of its population by the end of the year, but Tedros said 82 countries were now at risk of missing that target, chiefly through insufficient supply.

Covid-19 has killed at least 4.9 million people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP, while nearly 242 million cases have been registered.

## Haitian Kidnappers Threaten to Kill Missionaries



A protester threatens to throw stones at motorists trying to pass a road block set by anti-government protesters in Port-au-Prince . Photo by AP

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters) - A Haitian man identifying himself as the leader of the gang that kidnapped a group of American and Canadian missionaries said in a video posted on YouTube on Thursday that he was willing to kill "these Americans" if he does not get what he needs.

The speaker in the video, dressed in a purple suit, is recognizable as the man known in Haiti by the alias Lamo Sanjou, the leader of the 400 Mawozo gang

that authorities say is behind the abduction of the missionaries at the weekend.

The sixteen Americans and one Canadian - including five children - were on a trip organized by the Ohio-based Christian Aid Ministries. The missionaries were not present in the video.

Reuters was unable to independently confirm the veracity of the video or when it was made.

"If I don't find what I need, these Americans, I'd rather kill

them all, and I'll unload a big gun in the head of each of them," said the man in the video.

Haitian Justice Minister Liszt Quitel told Reuters this week that the kidnappers were demanding \$1 million per person for the release of the missionaries.

The missionaries' seizure has focused global attention on Haiti's dire kidnapping problem, which has worsened amid economic and political crises in the Caribbean nation that have led to spiraling violence.

The video includes footage of what appear to be five dead men laying in coffins, who the man described as "fallen soldiers," blaming their deaths on police chief Leon Charles.

The White House said on Thursday it would do all it could to help the missionaries. "We will do everything that we can to help resolve the situation," said White House deputy press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

A senior State Department official told reporters that the video was legitimate.

## Mass Protests in Sudan Against Prospect of Military Rule

KHARTOUM (Dispatches) - Huge crowds of people have marched in different parts of the Sudanese capital and other cities in demonstrations to reject military rule as the ongoing political turmoil deepens across the African country.

Tens of thousands of supporters of Sudan's transition to a civilian-led democracy on Thursday joined the march across Sudan, including Khartoum and its twin city of Khartoum Bahri, Omdurman, Port Sudan in the east, and Atbara to the north.

Many businesses in central Khartoum were closed in anticipation of the protest and there was an extensive police presence around flash points.

Plumes of smoke could be seen across the city as protesters burned tires and waved Sudanese flags.

Several government ministers and officials were seen marching in different parts of Khartoum.

"October 21 is a lesson for any tyrants, loyalists, or opportunists deluded into thinking they can turn back the hands of time," wrote Sovereign Council member Siddig Tawer, one of several civilian officials who endorsed the protests.

In the city of Omdurman, protesters

were met with heavy tear gas to prevent them from crossing a bridge leading to central Khartoum.

Banners proclaimed "Civilian (rule) is the people's choice", while the marchers chanted slogans against the military.

"Give up power, (Abdel Fattah) al-Burhan," they chanted in reference to the general who chairs the Sovereign Council, the so-called joint civilian-military body overseeing the transitional administration.

Many chants were critical of al-Burhan, accusing him of being loyal to former ousted regime of Omar al-Bashir. Some demanded he hand over leadership to civilians and others demanded his removal.

Thursday's protest was preceded by days of smaller neighborhood protests. Journalists and witnesses estimated the number of participants to be in the hundreds of thousands, making it the biggest demonstration of the transition.

The African country is currently ruled by a transitional government that was installed in the aftermath of the ouster of president al-Bashir in a palace coup two years ago. The military has shared power with civilians in a transitional authority since the removal

of al-Bashir in 2019 in a popular uprising after three decades in power.

Protesters say they were protesting the entire power-sharing agreement and demanded sole civilian rule.

The military says it is committed to the transition to democracy and elections at the end of 2023. Civilian leaders say the military aims to install a government it can control.

Anti-military sentiments have risen across Sudan over the past few months.

On September 30, thousands of Sudanese rallied in Khartoum against the military rulers. They demanded the formation of new transitional authorities that would exclusively consist of civilians. The angry protesters then chanted anti-junta slogans such as "the army is Sudan's army, not Burhan's army."

Commenting on the political turmoil across Sudan, Abdel Bari Atwan, editor-in-chief of London-based Rai al-Yaum, wrote in an analysis on September 23 that the situation across Sudan keeps worsening since Sudan surrendered its weapons to the U.S.-led camp in the last days of Bashir's rule, and its misfortunes escalated with the Sudanese junta "flirting" with the Zionist regime.

## Rocket Failure Mars U.S. Hypersonic Weapon Test



In this image released by NASA, a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket with the Lucy spacecraft aboard is rolled out of the Vertical Integration Facility to the launch pad at Space Launch Complex 41, Oct 14, 2021, in Cape Canaveral, Fla.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Pentagon's hypersonic weapon programs suffered a setback on Thursday when a booster rocket carrying a hypersonic weapon failed, people briefed on the test result said.

The test was intended to validate aspects of one of the Pentagon's hypersonic glide vehicles in development, two of the people said.

Hypersonic glide vehicles are launched from a rocket in the upper atmosphere before gliding to a target at speeds of more than five times the speed of sound, or about 3,853 miles (6,200 kilometers) per hour.

In a separate series of tests conducted on Wednesday, the U.S. Navy and Army tested hypersonic weapon component prototypes. That test successfully "demonstrated advanced hypersonic technologies, capabilities,

ties, and prototype systems in a realistic operating environment," the Pentagon said in a statement.

The United States and its global rivals have quickened their pace to build hypersonic weapons - the next generation of arms that rob adversaries of reaction time and traditional defeat mechanisms.

Glide bodies are different from their air-breathing hypersonic weapon cousins which use scramjet engine technology and the vehicle's high speed to forcibly compress incoming air before combustion to enable sustained flight at hypersonic speeds. An air-breathing hypersonic weapon was successfully tested in September.

Companies such as Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies are working to develop the hypersonic weapon capability for the United States.

## Myanmar Conflict Leading to Failed State, UN Envoy Warns



UN envoy: Myanmar faces possibility of major civil war. Photo by AP

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. special envoy for Myanmar has warned that February's military takeover has led to armed conflict and if power isn't returned to the people in a democratic way the country "will go in the direction of a failed state."

Christine Schraner Burgener told a U.N. news conference Thursday that conflict between the military, which took power on Feb. 1, and civilians and ethnic minorities is intensifying in many parts of the country.

"The repression of the military has led to more than 1,180 deaths," she said. "The army uses a range of tactics against civilian populations, including burning villages, looting properties, mass arrests, torture and execution of prisoners, gender-based violence and random artillery fire into residential areas." Schraner Burgener said the military is conducting clearing operations in Chin and several other states and there is continued fighting in Kachin and Shan states, "so all over the country we have a huge scale of violence."

She said the situation is reminiscent of the pattern of operations that the military, known as the Tatmadaw, used against Rohingya Muslims in northern Rakhine

state in 1997. The Rohingya were first targeted by Myanmar's security forces in 1997-98 and over 700,000 fled to neighboring Bangladesh after a military crackdown in 2017.

Schraner Burgener said the movement against the military is now "increasingly militarized," with the so-called National Unity Government formed by supporters of the ousted democratic government led by Aung San Suu Kyi seeking to mobilize a greater number of Peoples Defense Forces and calling for "a people's defense war."

"Clearly, in the absence of international action, violence has been justified as the last resort," she said.

Myanmar for five decades had languished under strict military rule that led to international isolation and sanctions. As the generals loosened their grip, culminating in Suu Kyi's rise to leadership in 2015 elections, the international community responded by lifting most sanctions and pouring investment into the country.

The military takeover earlier this year followed November elections, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won overwhelmingly and the military contests as fraudulent.

## News in Brief

SANTA FE (AP) — A prop firearm discharged by veteran actor Alec Baldwin, who is starring and producing a Western movie, killed his director of photography and injured the director Thursday at the movie set outside Santa Fe, the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office said. Sheriff's officials said Halyna Hutchins, director of photography for the movie "Rust," and director Joel Souza were shot. Hutchins, 42, was airlifted to University of New Mexico Hospital, where she was pronounced dead by medical personnel, authorities said. Souza, 48, was taken by ambulance to Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, where he's undergoing treatment for his injuries. Production has been halted on the film.

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ADDIS ABABA(Reuters) - Ethiopia carried out an air strike on the city of Mekelle for the third day this week, a government spokesperson said, in a campaign to weaken rebellious Tigrayan forces they have been fighting for nearly a year. Spokesperson Legesse Tulu told Reuters the strike hit a military training centre being used by the Tigrayan forces. He said the centre was a former base, known as the Northern Command, for the Ethiopian military in the area. War broke out in November 2020 between federal troops and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which ruled Ethiopia for three decades but now controls just the northern region. Thousands of people have been killed and more than 2 million have been forced to flee.

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MELBOURNE (Reuters) -Melbourne residents flocked to the city's restaurants and hair salons in the early hours of Friday after the world's most locked-down city emerged from its latest spate of restrictions designed to combat the spread of COVID-19. Australia's second-largest city has so far endured 262 days, or nearly nine months, of restrictions during six separate lockdowns since March 2020, representing the longest cumulative lockdown for any city in the world. Argentina's capital, Buenos Aires, last year went through 234 straight days of lockdown. In Melbourne, people were seen cheering and clapping from their balconies, while cars honked horns continuously at 11:59 p.m. on Thursday when lockdown restrictions in place since early August ended.

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WELLINGTON (AP) — New Zealand's government on Friday set an ambitious target of fully vaccinating 90% of all eligible people to end coronavirus lockdowns. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had been under pressure to provide a pathway to freedom for people living in Auckland, who have been in lockdown for more than two months. Under the new framework, people living in the largest city will regain many of their freedoms once 90% of people 12 and older across each of three districts are fully vaccinated. Other parts of the country without community spread of the virus will gain even broader freedoms once they hit the 90% target. However, people will be required to use new vaccine certificates to visit places like bars, restaurants and gyms. The government also promised more money to help businesses struggling under the lockdown restrictions and to boost vaccinations among Indigenous Maori, whose rates have been lagging.

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LAGOS(AP) — A Nigerian separatist leader accused of instigating violence in country's southeast pleaded not guilty to terrorism and treason charges in court Thursday in the capital, Abuja. Amid heavy security presence, Nnamdi Kanu, who also holds British citizenship, was brought into the court for his trial, which first began in 2015 but stalled after he jumped bail and escaped the country in 2017. He was arrested abroad and extradited back to Nigeria in June this year. The Nigerian government did not say where Kanu was arrested but the British High Commission in Nigeria has asked the Nigerian government to explain the circumstances of his arrest. The U.K. would also "expect any trial or legal proceedings to follow due process," Dean Hurlock, a British High Commission spokesman, said. Kanu leads the Indigenous People of Biafra a group pressing for the southeast region to break away from Nigeria and become an independent nation.