

March 20, 2024



# Future Trends

Brought to you by



Institute for  
Economics  
& Peace



Alliance for  
Peacebuilding

**Introducing another week of Future Trends** — *tracking current global news stories that provide insight into the future.*

Welcome to this week's Future Trends—the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, social factors, and conflict.

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Portugal's centre-right prepares to rule, far-right warns of instability
- Sudan war threatens world's largest hunger crisis, says UN
- Australia experiences biggest fall in living standards in 60 years
- Ice-free summers in Arctic possible within next decade, scientists say
- Ancient stone tools in Ukraine over 1 million years old

## POLITICS

**Portugal's centre-right prepares to rule, far-right warns of instability.** Portugal's centre-right Democratic Alliance won the general [election](#) by a slim margin ahead of the left-leaning Socialist Party and is preparing to govern without an outright majority. However, the far-right Chega warned of instability if it is not included in government.

**Biden backs legislation to ban TikTok.** President Biden endorsed legislation that could lead to the popular video-sharing app [TikTok being banned in the US](#), a move that comes amid growing concern in Washington about keeping Americans' data out of China's hands.

**Panama court annuls ex-President Martinelli's run for presidency.** Martinelli will not be able to run in the May 2024 elections due to a nearly [11-year prison sentence for money laundering](#). Most polls before the court ruling placed Martinelli as the favourite to win the election.

**Hong Kong issues new national security law bill with tougher jail terms.** The draft covers [high-security threats](#), including treason, insurrection, and sabotage, which can be punished up to life imprisonment. It has also broadened what could be considered as state secrets and sedition. Some fear it could further restrict freedoms in the financial hub.

**US court finds former Honduran president guilty.** Ex President Hernandez faces a life sentence for [cocaine trafficking](#) to the US and weapons conspiracy. Hondurans celebrated the verdict, saying Hernandez was responsible for widespread corruption.

---

## CONFLICT

**Sudan war threatens world's largest hunger crisis, says UN.** The World Food Program warned that [90% of people facing emergency levels of hunger in Sudan](#) are stuck in areas that are largely inaccessible, and 25 million people are facing food insecurity.

**Pope Francis: Ukraine should have courage to negotiate end of war with Russia.** Pope Francis said that Ukraine, facing a possible defeat, should have the courage to negotiate an end to the [war with Russia](#) and not be ashamed to sit at the same table to carry out peace talks.

**Mass kidnappings of Nigerian students leave parents in shock.** The kidnapping in Kuriga was [one of three mass kidnappings in northern Nigeria](#) since late last week. A group of gunmen abducted 15 children from a school in another northwestern state, Sokoto, and a few days earlier 200 people were kidnapped in northeastern Borno State.

**Turkish police detain 33 accused of plotting election attacks.** The 33 people were suspected of [ties to Islamic State](#), and allegedly preparing attacks ahead of the country's local elections on March 31, Interior Minister Yerlikaya said. Counter-terrorism police in northwest Turkey recovered weapons, cash and "organisational documents" during raids.

**India conducts first flight of missile that can carry multiple warheads.** The home-grown missile with [multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle \(MIRV\) technology](#) is the latest development in India's nuclear-capable Agni missile series. It delivers multiple warheads to different targets fired from the same missile and has a range of 5,000km.

---

## ECONOMICS

**Australia experiences biggest fall in living standards in 60 years.** The country's per capita [disposable income](#) has declined every consecutive quarter for the last two years.

**Egypt secures IMF deal, after rate hike and currency plunge.** Egypt secured an expanded [\\$8 billion deal](#) with the International Monetary Fund hours after the central bank unshackled its currency and delivered a 600 basis points rate hike in a push to stabilise the economy.

**Russia, China team up against US dollar with planned blockchain payments.** The Kremlin said BRICS nations plan to develop a [new payment system based on blockchain](#), attempting to reduce the influence of the US dollar. BRICS is an economic cooperation bloc originally made up of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, expanding this year to include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Iran, and Ethiopia.

**India signs \$100bn free trade deal with four European nations.** The [deal with the European Free Trade Association](#) will see investments in India of \$100bn, the country's trade minister says. The EFTA is made up of Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

**Bitcoin hits new record high above \$70,400.** The [cryptocurrency](#) has been boosted by a flood of cash into new spot bitcoin exchange-traded funds as well as hopes that the US Federal Reserve will soon cut interest rates.

---

## DEVELOPMENT

**Ice-free summers in Arctic possible within next decade, scientists say.** The Arctic could have [summer days with practically no sea ice](#) within the next decade due to emissions from burning fossil fuels. This would transform the unique habitat from a "white Arctic" to a "blue Arctic" during the summer months, scientists said.

**US will build pier in Gaza.** A US Army vessel carrying equipment for building a temporary [pier in Gaza](#) was on its way to the Mediterranean to ramp up aid deliveries.

**Scientists grow mini lungs and other organs.** UK scientists have created [mini organs from cells](#) floating in the fluid that surrounds a fetus in the womb – an advance they believe could open new areas of prenatal medicine.

**Saudi woman constructs world's first 3D-printed mosque.** Wajnat Abdulwaheed, a businesswoman, paid tribute to her deceased husband by completing a 60,000 square feet [3D-printed mosque](#) using cutting-edge printers from Chinese firm Guanli.

**Study of polyglots offers insight on brain's language processing.** While most people speak only one language or perhaps two, some are proficient in many. These people are called [polyglots](#). And they are helping to provide insight into how the brain deals with language, the principal method of human communication.

---

## SOCIAL

**Ancient stone tools in Ukraine over 1 million years old.** Ancient [stone tools](#) found in western Ukraine may be the oldest known evidence of early human presence in Europe. Researchers think the chipped stones, deliberately fashioned from volcanic rock, may have been fashioned by Homo erectus, the first human species to walk upright and master the use of fire.

**Indigenous Bolivian women take up taekwondo against gender-based violence.** Data shows that eight out of 10 women and girls in Bolivia suffer [physical violence](#) at least once in their lives. A large group of indigenous women have started teaching and learning taekwondo as a way to prevent further violence.

**Deadliest Year on Record for Migrants with Nearly 8,600 Deaths in 2023.** The 2023 death toll represents an [increase of 20%](#) compared to 2022. The Mediterranean crossing continues to be the deadliest route for migrants on record, being responsible for more than a third of all migrant deaths.

**230 million females circumcised globally, 30 million more than 2016.** Although the practice is declining, it is not happening at a rapid pace, and can cause excessive bleeding and even death. UNICEF is concerned as [more and more girls are subjected to the practice at a younger age](#), many before their fifth birthday.

**More than 100 officials died after Indonesia's election.** The recent election is the [largest single day election in the world](#), but the stress is being blamed for the deaths. The health ministry said heart disease was the biggest cause of death. Other causes included septic shock, hypertension and accidents.

---

## PEACEBUILDING

[Rotary International and the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School at George](#)

**[Mason University have established a new partnership](#)** to provide education and develop modalities to assist Rotary clubs in promoting local, regional, and global peace. They plan to incubate new peacebuilding ideas and accelerate existing efforts to make them more effective. The Carter School will also assist in developing peacebuilding action “templates” that can be duplicated and applied to address the demands of different conflicts and tap into its Better Evidence Project, which hosts an online depository of peacebuilding research and applied successes.

**[Peace News is pledging to highlight the voices of the members of the Alliance for Middle East Peace, who remain peace activists even during the Israel-Gaza War](#)**. Only 5% of ALLMEP members are suspending programming and only 3.7% have said they are not in a place to strategize peacebuilding efforts with their counterparts on the other side, according to an ALLMET survey of its members in January cited by Peace News. Of the 160+ members of ALLMEP, 44% have been implementing cross-border programs, 38% have been implementing programs focused on shared society work between Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel, 14% have been focused on both, and 2.6% have worked on Palestinian uninationaional programs. according to Peace News.

The **[Carter Center](#)** has released a new **[Journalism Resource Guide for Mental Health Reporting](#)**. The guide, which is available in English and [Spanish](#), provides up-to-date statistics, resources, and guidance on how to report on mental health issues accurately and sensitively. It was developed in part with funding from the [National Institute for Health Care Management](#) and in partnership with the [World Psychiatric Association](#) and the [International Center for Journalists](#).

**[The Tohono O'odham Utility Authority is laying down a fiber optic network to provide high-speed Internet to members of the nation](#)**. Tribal authorities and residents expect the new network to enable new healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. Tohono O'odham Community College is offering a train the trainer course on how to use the Internet. The course will provide 10 members from each district with computer education. These 10 people will then train another family member, friend or co-worker. The network and training are funded by a \$10 million grant from the US Department of Agriculture, but some tribal members may not have access to a computer or smartphone at home. The FCC reports almost 28 percent of tribal land residents lack high-speed broadband, compared to 1.5 percent of urban residents.