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**Headlines:**

- **Global Population Growth Hits Lowest Rate**
- **Russia Cuts Gas to Europe**
- **SAS Unit Repeatedly Killed Afghan Detainees, BBC Find**

**Details:**

### Global Population Growth Hits Lowest Rate

Global population growth hits lowest rate since 1950, a UN reports has found. The global population grew by less than 1% a year for the first time since the aftermath of the Second World War in 2020 and 2021 with Europe's total population actually falling during the Coronavirus pandemic. The populations of 61 countries – mainly the developed world are forecast to decrease by at least 1% between 2022 and 2050, and the associated low fertility rates will also combine with better healthcare to accelerate the ageing of societies. However, the rising proportion of older people in many countries is predicted to hit economic growth and public finances and is already posing growing political challenges. Europe's population shrank by 744,000 in 2020 and by 1.4mn last year — the largest fall of any continent since records began in 1950. However, the pandemic "is not the main factor", said John Wilmoth, director of the population division of the UN's economic and social affairs department. The fertility rate "has been quite low in almost all European countries for many decades and that means there aren't lots of young people", he said.

### Russia Cuts Gas to Europe

Russia stopped pumping gas through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline to Germany in order to carry out scheduled repairs, which are set to last until July 21. Russia had already significantly reduced deliveries, claiming it was due to the delayed return from Canada of a turbine. Ukraine has already shut down it pipeline system due to Russia attacks, so the German Nord Stream pipeline remain the only viable pipeline sending energy to Europe. It was also the sole pipeline bringing energy to Germany, who depends upon Russia for energy. With energy prices going through the roof and deliveries in decline, carrying out maintenance work at such a critical time would indicate Russia is trying to blackmail Germany into leaving the Western coalition set up against it due to its invasion of Ukraine.

### SAS Unit Repeatedly Killed Afghan Detainees, BBC Find

SAS operatives (special forces unit of the British Army) in Afghanistan repeatedly killed detainees and unarmed men in suspicious circumstances, according to a BBC investigation. Newly obtained military reports suggest that one unit may have unlawfully killed 54 people in one six-month tour. The BBC found evidence suggesting the former head of special forces failed to pass on evidence to a murder inquiry. The Ministry of Defence said British troops "served with courage and professionalism in Afghanistan". The BBC understands that General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, the former head of UK Special Forces, was briefed about the alleged unlawful killings but did not pass on the evidence to the Royal Military Police, even after the RMP began a murder investigation into the SAS squadron. BBC Panorama analysed hundreds of pages of SAS operational accounts, including reports covering more than a dozen "kill or capture" raids carried out by one SAS squadron in Helmand in 2010/11. Individuals who served with the SAS squadron on that deployment told the BBC they witnessed the SAS operatives kill unarmed people during night raids. They also said they saw the operatives using so-called "drop weapons" - AK-47s planted at a scene to justify the killing of an unarmed person.

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