

Thousands in Haiti march to demand safety from violent gangs



Several thousand people – their faces covered to conceal their identities – marched through Haiti's capital on Monday demanding protection from violent gangs who are pillaging neighborhoods in the capital Port-au-Prince and beyond. Haitians' daily lives have been disrupted by incessant gang violence that has worsened poverty across the country as it awaits a decision from the UN Security Council over a potential deployment of an international armed force.

"We want security!" the crowd chanted as it marched for two hours from the troubled community of Carrefour-Feuilles to Champ de Mars in the downtown area and then to the prime minister's official residence, where police broke up the demonstration with tear gas. "I can't work. I can't go out. I'm like a prisoner in my own home," said Wilene Joseph, a 36-year-old street vendor and mother of two who joined the march out of frustration. "I worry about my kids being shot

because bullets are flying from all directions all the time," Joseph said of her children, ages 5 and 7. "The situation is unacceptable." Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, experts say gangs have seized control of up to 80% of Port-au-Prince, killing, raping and sowing terror in communities already suffering endemic poverty. From January to March, more than 1,600 people have been reported killed, injured or kidnapped,

a nearly 30% increase compared with the last three months of 2022, according to the newest UN report. On Monday, UNICEF announced an "alarming spike" in kidnappings, with nearly 300 confirmed cases so far this year, almost equaling the number reported for all of last year, and almost three times the total for 2021. The agency noted that women and children are increasingly being kidnapped and used for financial or tactical gain.



People march as tires burn during a protest against insecurity on August 7, 2023, near the Prime Minister's official house in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. **● RICHARD PIERRIN/AFP**

NEWS IN BRIEF

MPs debates no-confidence motion against Modi gov't



AFP – India's parliament debated a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government on Tuesday, a day after opposition leader Rahul Gandhi returned to the house.

The opposition Congress party launched the debate in a bid to force comment from Modi on months of deadly ethnic conflict in northeastern Manipur state, with a vote potentially to be held on Thursday.

Rains unleash landslides, flooding in Scandinavia

AFP – Heavy rains caused flooding and landslides in Sweden and Norway on Tuesday while strong winds caused a Danish wildfire to spread out of control, authorities said, with more heavy rain forecast.

A storm dubbed "Hans" swept in over the Nordic countries over the weekend, leaving a path of destruction.

Residents of the ski resort town of Are in northwestern Sweden were advised to stay clear of the Susabacken stream after it overflowed, sending mud and rocks coursing through the town and causing damage to roads and houses, Sweden's crisis information website Krisinformation reported.

European scientists: July was hottest month on record by far

Now that July's sizzling numbers are all in, the European climate monitoring organization made it official: July 2023 was Earth's hottest month on record by a wide margin.

July's global average temperature of 16.95 degrees Celsius (62.51 degrees Fahrenheit) was a third of a degree Celsius (six tenths of a degree Fahrenheit) higher than the previous record set in 2019, Copernicus Climate Change Service, a division of the European Union's space program, announced Tuesday. Normally global temperature records are broken by hundredths or a tenth of a degree, so this margin is unusual, according to AP. "These records have dire consequences for both people and the planet exposed to ever more frequent and intense extreme events," said Copernicus deputy director Samantha Burgess. There have been deadly heat waves in

the Southwestern United States and Mexico, Europe and Asia. Scientific quick studies put the blame on human-caused climate change from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

Days in July have been hotter than previously recorded from July 2 on. It's been so extra warm that Copernicus and the World Meteorological Organization made the unusual early announcement that it was likely the hottest month days before it ended. Tuesday's calculations made it official. The month was 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than pre-industrial times. In 2015, the nations of the world agreed to try to prevent long-term warming — not individual months or even years, but decades — that is 1.5 degrees warmer than pre-industrial times.

Last month was so hot, it was .7 degrees Celsius (1.3 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than the average July from 1991 to 2020, Copernicus said. The world's oceans were half a degree Celsius (0.9 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer than the previous 30 years and the North Atlantic was 1.05 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than average. Antarctica set record lows for sea ice, 15% below average for this time of year.



A woman covers her head with a shawl amid soaring temperatures in Dubai, UAE, on August 3, 2023. **● KARIM SAHIB/AFP**

Belarus begins military drills near its border with Poland, Lithuania



Belarus began military exercises Monday near its border with Poland and Lithuania, a move coming with tensions already heightened with the two NATO members over Russia-linked Wagner mercenaries moving to Belarus after their short-lived mutiny in Russia.

Both Poland and Lithuania have increased border security since thousands of Wagner fighters arrived in Russian-allied Belarus under a deal that ended their armed rebellion in late June and allowed them and their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to avoid criminal charges, AP reported.

Leaders of the two NATO nations have said they are braced for provocations from Moscow and Minsk in a sensitive area where both countries border Belarus as well as the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. They commented early in August after two Belarusian helicopters flew briefly at low altitude into Polish air space. Belarusian authorities denied their helicopters entered Poland.

The Belarusian Defense Ministry said the drills that began Monday are based on experiences from "the special military operation" — the term Russia uses for its war in Ukraine. It said that includes the "use of drones as well as the close interaction of tank and motorized rifle units with units of other branches of the armed forces." The war games were taking place in the Grodno region of Belarus, near the so-called Suwalki Gap — a sparsely populated stretch of land running 96 kilometers (60 miles) along the Polish-Lithuanian border. It links the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia with the rest of the NATO alliance and separates Belarus from Kaliningrad, a heavily militarized Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea that has no land connection to Russia.

War crimes by Myanmar's military 'more frequent and brazen': UN

War crimes committed by Myanmar's military, including the bombing of civilians, have become "increasingly frequent and brazen", a team of United Nations investigators said in a report published on Tuesday.

The report by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), which covered the period between July 2022 and June 2023, said there was "strong evidence that the Myanmar military and its affiliate militias have committed three types of combat-related war crimes with increasing frequency and brazenness", according to Reuters.

These crimes include the indiscriminate or disproportionate targeting of civilians using bombs and the burning of civilian homes and buildings, resulting at times in the destruction of entire villages, it said.

The report also cited "killings of civilians or combatants detained during operations".

"Our evidence points to a dramatic increase in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country, with widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, and we are building case files that can be used by courts to hold individual perpetrators responsible," said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the IIMM.

Since a junta seized power two years ago, Myanmar has been plunged into chaos, with a resistance movement fighting the military on multiple fronts after a bloody crackdown on opponents that saw Western countries re-impose sanctions.

A spokesperson for the junta could not be reached for comment on the findings made by UN investigators.

The junta has previously denied atrocities have taken place, saying it is carrying out a legitimate campaign against terrorists.



Over 1,000 evacuated as Portugal wildfire spreads

REUTERS – Hundreds of firefighters scrambled on Tuesday to put out a blaze raging in southern Portugal that has scorched thousands of hectares of land and forced the evacuation of around 1,400 people.

The wildfire, currently being tackled by over 850 firefighters and six water-bombing planes, started on Saturday in the municipality of Odemira, in the Alentejo region, but has since spread south towards the Algarve, one of Portugal's top tourist destinations.

High temperatures and strong winds have complicated efforts to fight the flames..