

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin told senators on Tuesday pressure on Israel to improve humanitarian aid to Gaza appears to be working, but more must be done, and it remains to be seen if that improvement will keep going.

The hearing was the first time lawmakers on both sides were able to question Pentagon leaders on the administration's Israel strategy following Tel Aviv's deadly strike on World Central Kitchen humanitarian aid workers in Gaza.

Six months into the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, Israeli forces have not been able to eradicate the U.S.-designated terrorist group Hamas or free the remaining hostages, and some analysts say the war could escalate even further. Linda Gradstein reports for VOA from Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu this week said that Israel has a date for an invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza.

Israeli analysts say that even without an invasion of Rafah, the six-month-old war with Hamas is at a crossroads.

Israel has also come under growing international criticism for the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The U.N. says more than a quarter of Gaza's population is on the verge of starvation.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights told the BBC that there is plausible evidence that Israel is using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza.

Linda Gradstein, VOA News, Jerusalem.

U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blanket on Tuesday said the U.S. was having an ongoing conversation with Israel about any Rafah operation.

"... (we're) talking to them about alternative and, in our judgment, effective ways at solving a problem that needs to be solved, but doing it in a way that does not endanger the innocent."

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The European Court of Human Rights ruled on Tuesday in favor of a group of elderly Swiss women who had argued that their government's inadequate efforts to combat climate change puts them at risk of dying during heat waves. Reuters correspondent Alice Rizzo has more.

The verdict which cannot be appealed is a potential turning point for climate action. It could compel the Swiss government to take greater action on reducing emissions, like revising Switzerland's 2030 emissions reductions targets to get in line with the Paris Agreement.

The European court's ruling brought by more than 2,000 elderly women could have a ripple effect across Europe and beyond. But in a sign of the complexities of climate litigation, the court rejected two similar climate related cases. The first, brought by six Portuguese youth against 32 European governments and another by the former mayor of a low-lying French coastal town.

Reuters correspondent Alice Rizzo.

More than 200 chemical plants in the U.S. must reduce toxic emissions likely to cause cancer under a new Environmental Protection Agency rule.

Officials say Tuesday's rule advances President Joe Biden's commitment to environmental justice with health protections for communities burdened by industrial pollution from chemicals.

Arizona's top court, the southwestern U.S. state, revived a law dating to 1864 on Tuesday that bans abortion in virtually all instances. Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner reports.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs slammed a ruling by the state's Supreme Court on Tuesday to revive a law dating back to 1864 that bans abortion in virtually all instances.

"I am devastated by this decision."

The Democratic governor called for the Republican-controlled legislature to repeal the Civil War-era ban.

"We are 14 days away from this extreme ban coming back to life. It must be repealed."

In Arizona, a crucial swing state, the issue could ultimately be decided by the voters, after a group of abortion rights advocates last week said it gathered enough signatures to put on the November ballot a measure that would enshrine in the state's constitution a right to an abortion until fetal viability.

Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner.

Russia and Kazakhstan ordered more than 100,000 people to evacuate after swiftly melting snow swelled mighty rivers beyond bursting point in the worst flooding in the area for at least 70 years.

The deluge of meltwater overwhelmed scores of settlements in mountains, Siberia and other areas of Kazakhstan close to rivers, which local officials said had risen by meters in a matter of hours to the highest levels ever recorded.

I'm Joe Ramsey, VOAN...