VOA NEWS

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VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

A powerful storm is headed toward the Philippines, Taiwan and Hong Kong, barreling across the Pacific Ocean with wind gusts of more than 250 kilometers an hour. It's the equivalent of a Category 5 Atlantic hurricane.

It has already passed the U.S. territory of Guam, where it caused widespread flooding and power outages.

It's now forecast to hit the northern Philippines on Friday, then move on to Taiwan before heading to Hong Kong and southern China by Sunday.

It could affect as many as 43 million people.

Emergency workers in the mid-Atlantic state of North Carolina are warning people to finish their preparations in anticipation of the arrival of an especially powerful hurricane. The storm is expected to bring life-threatening rainfall of 50 to 75 centimeters and winds of up to 250 kilometers per hour beginning late Thursday.

Associated Press correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

President Trump is blunt about Florence "get out of its way."

"Don't play games with it. It's a big one, may be as big as they've seen."

He tweeted a tape to message, saying authorities are ready to handle Florence, but still "It's called Mother Nature. You never know. But we know."

FEMA says this is the last good day for those in Florence's path to evacuate.

Sagar Meghani, at the White House.

The United States says it has determined that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are taking sufficient steps to prevent civilian destruction in Yemen, where Saudi coalition airstrikes have killed thousands of civilians.

But senior members of Congress from both political parties on Wednesday rejected the determination and Human Rights Watch said in a tweet that the determination was based on a "farcical analysis."

This is VOA news.

U.N. human rights experts are warning that all-out war in the northern Syrian enclave of Idlib would result in the massacre of civilians worse than any other seen throughout more than seven years of war in Syria.

Correspondent Lisa Schlein reports for VOA from Geneva, where the three-member Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria has released its latest report on the human rights situation in the country.

Since Syria's civil war broke out in 2011, more than six and one half million people have become internally displaced in less than the first six months of this year. The Independent Commission of Inquiry finds fighting has forced more than 1 million people to flee their homes. It says this unparalleled number of displacements is due to escalating battles by pro-government forces to recapture territory from armed groups and terrorist organizations.

South Sudan's warring parties on Wednesday signed what they say is the final peace agreement to end the country's five-year-long civil war, which has killed tens of thousands people and displaced millions.

Several preliminary agreements have already been signed but both sides say this is the concluding version.

Apple announced new models of the iPhone and Apple watch on Wednesday.

Associated Press correspondent Ed Donahue reports.

The words to describe the iPhone X include big.

"And it is just stunning."

CEO Tim Cook used the other word, big, several times.

"The biggest screen ever in an iPhone, the biggest battery ever in an iPhone, and of course, the biggest experience ever in an iPhone."

Apple is trying to widen the appeal of the iPhone as sales of the older models slow down.

"Big" could describe the price of the new iPhones.

"XS at 9.99 and XS Max at 10.99, "close to $1,100.

Apple also showed off a cheaper $750 iPhone, the XR.

I'm Ed Donahue.

A new report by Transparency International suggests foreign bribery is alive and well.

The report by the Berlin-based anti-corruption watchdog suggests little has changed in recent years in the way governments enforce their anti-bribery laws. It says today, only seven major exporting countries, the United States among them, actively crack down on companies that offer bribes to foreign officials in exchange for favorable business deals.

Seven countries together account for 27 percent of world exports. They are Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the U.S.

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