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Global News Dispatches: 5 Stories

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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

Headlines in This News Package:

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- **Thailand Gets New Prime Minister**
- **More Than 350 Wildfires Afflicting Greece**
- **Saudi Arabia's Government Accused of Killing Hundreds of Ethiopian Migrants**
- **Ecuador Bans Oil Drilling on Section of Indigenous Land**

[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

Global Rice Shortage Driving up Prices in Africa's Largest Slum

[181 words]

The [Associated Press reported](#) that rice prices are up dramatically in places like Africa's largest slum, Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya. A 55-pound bag of rice has risen in cost from June to August 2023 by about 20 percent, said the AP.

Global rice exports are at about 80 percent of needed supply. That, says the AP, amounts to 10.4 million tons that the world's markets are short.

The proximate cause of the shortage is India's government's decision in July 2023 to restrict exports. India is the world's leading exporter of rice. With its government's choice ahead of next year's elections, competitors like Vietnam are looking to take advantage of the shortfall even as they too attempt to curb domestic inflation.

However, even before India's move, other countries had begun stockpiling rice in anticipation of weather brought on by the El Nino effect, expected to be more extreme than in the past. Moreover, global food security is threatened by other factors as well. These include wheat prices rising with the Russia-Ukraine war and other impacts of climate change besides El Nino.

Thailand Gets New Prime Minister

[182 words]

Three months after the May 2023 elections, Thailand finally got a new prime minister despite the fact that his party didn't get the most votes, [reported CNN](#). Srettha Thavisin is the country's 30th prime minister, and while he is new to politics, his Pheu Thai party is backed by former prime minister and [billionaire](#) Thaksin Shinawatra.

The social democratic [Move Forward Party \(MFP\)](#) won the elections, with 36 percent of the vote, after a [meteoric rise in polls](#) over the course of 2023. However, its 151 seats in Thailand's 500-member lower house were not enough to form a government. Thailand also has a Senate whose 250 members are appointed by the military. A majority of both houses together must approve new governments, and in July, the MFP lost a vote to lead a coalition government.

As a result, Pheu Thai was given the opportunity to form a government. It did so by including two parties that supported a 2014 military coup in the country, breaking an electoral promise.

The coup was the most recent of several that have affected Thailand since 1933.

More Than 350 Wildfires Afflicting Greece

[125 words]

At least 20 people are dead, [reported Reuters](#), as more than 350 wildfires were sparked in Greece since August 19. Athens was "smothered in smoke and ash."

Wildfires are normal in Greek summers, but unusual heat and high winds linked to climate change are causing worse impacts than normal, said Reuters. Europe's record high temperatures could be broken this year, which [saw the hottest month on record worldwide](#)

in July. Heat waves killed over 60,000 people in Europe in 2022.

While the impact of climate change on the Global North is undeniable, [some have argued](#) that its countries are also not doing enough to combat the problem. Industrialized economies have also historically contributed the most emissions to the atmosphere compared to the Global South.

Saudi Arabia's Government Accused of Killing Hundreds of Ethiopian Migrants

[200 words]

The nongovernmental organization [Human Rights Watch](#) released shocking claims that Saudi Arabia had killed hundreds or more Ethiopian migrants and asylum-seekers at the Saudi-Yemeni border. The allegations, the group said, could constitute “crimes against humanity.”

Saudi border guards are accused of using explosives and shooting at groups of incoming migrants. They are also alleged to descend from their vehicles to assault migrants, to execute them, or to force them to commit sexual violence.

“We were fired on repeatedly... I saw 30 killed people on the spot. I pushed myself under a rock and slept there. I could feel people sleeping around me. I realized what I thought were people sleeping around me were actually dead bodies. I woke up and I was alone,” [said](#) a 14-year-old migrant interviewed in the report.

“The killings appear to be a deliberate escalation in both the number and manner of targeted killings,” [said](#) Human Rights Watch.

[Ethiopia](#) faces serious issues like drought, disease, human rights abuses, malnutrition, and civil conflict. These are some of the causes that lead migrants to flee, often by dangerous routes. There are about [750,000](#) people from Ethiopia in Saudi Arabia, primarily economic migrants, according to Human Rights Watch.

Ecuador Bans Oil Drilling on Section of Indigenous Land

[132 words]

[“Democracy Now!”](#) reported that Ecuadorian voters in the country’s presidential election on August 20 also passed a referendum banning oil extraction in the Amazon’s Yasuni National Park. The land has traditionally been occupied by [Indigenous peoples](#).

“It sets a crucial precedent for all Indigenous territories in the Amazon, as well as for the world, because this is the first time that people actually get to vote on an oil project, let alone an existing oil project,” [said](#) Helena Gualinga, an Indigenous environmental activist

who spoke to the program from Ecuador.

According to Gualinga, the state-owned oil company Petroecuador will be prevented from establishing a new contract. Its current contract, she said, expires in one year. However, she said, there are eight other oil projects underway in the park notwithstanding the referendum's decision.