Poland’s ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party has returned to power, in another blow to democracy in Eastern Europe. Since coming to power in 2015, the PiS party has undermined the rule of law and independence of key institutions. They passed laws (ultimately declared unconstitutional) to force judges to retire early and give the government more say in selection of judges and prosecutorial decisions. They stripped the independence of the National Broadcasting system and turned it into a propaganda tool. They have pursued restrictive right-wing nationalist policies and they have promised to be more extreme in their second term. There are fears about press-freedom, with the PiS having promised to create a new body to regulate journalism. Poland has already dropped from 18th to the 58th place in the Reporters Without Border’s (RSF) press freedom index. While the election results were closer than expected, with the opposition taking control of the Polish Senate, it doesn’t portend well for the future of democracy in Europe or the upcoming elections in Hungary.

Trump Presses for Cease-fire in Syria after Violence Escalates

A week after providing sanction for the Turkish invasion of the Kurdish administered area of Syria, US President Donald Trump has called for a cease-fire in the light of escalating violence in Syria. He has also ordered sanctions against Turkey. Many observers had predicted that allowing Turkey to invade Northern Syria would enable a genocide, but the US government appeared to be caught off-guard. Turkey has carried out air-strikes on civilian areas and Turkish-affiliated militias have carried out executions of Kurdish politicians. The last straw may have been when US military troops still in the area came under Turkish artillery fire. Meanwhile, the Kurds have moved to make a deal with Bashar Al-Assad and Russia, with Russian troops already patrolling between Turkish and Kurdish forces on the border.

Japan left Reeling by Typhoon Hagibis

Typhoon Hagibis was the most powerful typhoon to hit Japan in six-decades. Coming on the heels of Typhoon Faxai which made a landfall a month ago, Hagibis has resulted in 74 deaths and left thousands stranded. 1,38,000 homes were without water and 4,25,000 homes were without electricity in the aftermath of the Typhoon. The worst hit region was the Kanto region where both Hagibis and had Faxai first made landfall. Rescue operations are still ongoing, with the typhoon expected to have a prolonged economic impact. While Japan typically receives 6-7 typhoons a year, both Hagibis and Faxai were notable for their strength and the devastation they caused. Climate scientists see this as a consequence of the climate emergency, with global heating resulting in more frequent and powerful typhoons being formed in the Asia-Pacific region.