

Trump faces setbacks in other probes as NY case proceeds

Former US president Donald Trump faces the most urgent legal challenge of his life this week in New York, where he's set to be arraigned today on charges arising from hush money payments during his 2016 campaign.

But as much of the attention will be on the courthouse in lower Manhattan, investigations from Atlanta to Washington will press forward, underscoring the broad range of peril he confronts as he seeks to reclaim the presidency, AP reported.

The vulnerability Trump faces in Washington alone has become clear over the past month, as judges in a succession of sealed rulings have turned aside the Trump team's efforts to block grand jury testimony – including from his own lawyer and his former vice president – from witnesses who were, or still are, close to him and who could conceivably offer direct insight

into key events. The rulings directing advisers and aides to testify don't suggest that the Justice Department is close to bringing criminal charges, nor do they guarantee that prosecutors can secure testimony valuable to a potential prosecution. But they're nonetheless a key, closed-door win for the government as it investigates whether classified documents were criminally mishandled at Trump's Florida home and the possible obstruction of that probe, as well as efforts by Trump and his allies to undo the results of the 2020 presidential election. Meanwhile, the district attorney in Atlanta is continuing to investigate attempts by Trump and his allies to undo his election loss in Georgia. A special grand jury in February said it believed "one or more witnesses" committed perjury and urged local prosecutors to bring charges.

The former president never testified before the special grand jury, meaning he is not among those who could have perjured themselves. But the report doesn't foreclose the possibility of other charges, and the case still poses particular challenges for Trump, in part because his actions in Georgia were so public. Overall, the number of sealed disputes over the scope of grand jury testimony is unusual but perhaps befitting for hugely consequential probes like one concerning a former president. It also stands in contrast to the last special counsel investigation involving Trump, when he was president and when Robert Mueller and his team of prosecutors sought to determine whether Trump's 2016 campaign had colluded with Russia to tip the election. In that probe, a lawyer inside the White House, Ty Cobb, facilitated voluntary



● HAIYUN JIANG/THE NEW YORK TIMES

interviews of White House staff – without subpoenas – in hopes that coop-

eration would hasten the investigation toward conclusion.

Israeli troops kill two Palestinians, injure several others in Nablus raid

Two Palestinians have been shot dead during an Israeli military raid in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, as the Israeli regime's far-right Netanyahu administration intensifies its deadly raids across the occupied territories.

Wafa reported that confrontations broke out soon after Israeli forces stormed Nablus, located approximately 49 kilometers north of al-Quds, in the early hours of Monday, with dozens of armored vehicles and special forces, Press TV reported. The Palestinian Ministry of Health later identified the victims as Muhammad Nasser Saeed and Muhammad Abu Bakr Junaidi. The victims sustained serious gunshot wounds as Palestinian resistance fighters engaged in clashes with Israeli forces during the raid. Witnesses described Israeli soldiers opening fire indiscriminately.



Ahmed Jibril, director of ambulance and emergency services at the Palestine Red Crescent Society in Nablus, said that Israeli troops raided Nablus Speciality Hospital with poisonous gas bombs. He noted that at least 55 Palestinians also suffered breathing difficulties due to inhaling tear gas fired by the Israeli forces. A man was injured in his foot after he was attacked by an Israeli police dog. The Gaza-based Hamas resistance movement said, "There is no way to confront the occupying Israeli regime other than resistance and an increase in retaliatory measures."



Deceased Palestinians Muhammad Nasser Saeed (L.) and Muhammad Abu Bakr Junaidi

"Monday morning's deaths, which bring the number of Palestinians killed since the start of the year to 95, clearly indicate the rise in the criminal policy of the Israeli enemy and its widespread exercise of murder and assassination," Hamas said. It also stressed that the surge in the Israeli regime's crimes and its utter disregard for Palestinian lives necessitate stronger retaliatory measures against Israeli troops and extremist Jewish settlers.

Teachers in England reject pay offer, announce further strikes

Teachers in England have overwhelmingly rejected a pay offer from the British government aimed at ending a series of disruptive strikes, their trade union said on Monday, announcing two further days of walkouts. The National Education Union, Britain's largest education union, said 98% of teachers who voted in the ballot followed its advice to reject the offer of a one-off payment this year of 1,000 pounds and an average pay rise of 4.5% in the next financial year, Reuters reported. "This resounding rejection of the government's offer should leave (education minister) Gillian Keegan in no doubt that she will need to come back to the negotiating table with a much better proposal," NEU joint General Secretaries Mary Boustead and Kevin Courtney said in a statement.



Tens of thousands of teachers across Britain have taken strike action this year in demand of an above-inflation pay award, leaving classrooms empty and heaping pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to help resolve the dispute. The union said teachers would take two further days of strike action, on April 27 and May 2. The government has argued that higher pay rises would only worsen inflation.



Teachers attend a march during strike action in a dispute over pay, in London, Britain March 15, 2023. ● PETER NICHOLLS/REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

UN calls for accountability push in Libya



AFP – The UN rights chief called Monday for Libyan authorities and the international community to step up accountability efforts in the conflict-ravaged country, as a probe into war crimes wrapped up. Volker Turk's comments came as the so-called UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya, set up by the UN Human Rights Council in 2020, wound up its operations and handed over its archives and the evidence it had collected to his office in Geneva.

Bulgaria's 5th election in two years unlikely to end turmoil



AFP – Bulgaria's conservative party emerged with a slight lead Monday as the country remains politically divided with five elections in two years, the election commission said with nearly all votes tallied. The results from Sunday's vote mean the political stalemate is likely to continue in the EU member state. The conservative GERB garnered around 26.5% of the vote, just ahead of the 24.9% of reformist liberal coalition PP/DB, according to the Central Electoral Commission.

Tunisian opposition demands clarification on 'missing' president

BLOOMBERG – Tunisia's main opposition group urged the government to address growing speculation over President Kais Saied's health after he failed to make a public appearance in almost two weeks. The government should consider temporarily assuming executive powers if Saied, 65, is unable to perform his role, the head of the National Salvation Front, a coalition of opposition parties including the Ennahda long at odds with the president, said Monday. Presidential spokesman Walid El-Hajjam didn't respond to requests for comment.

Revival of Arab League



● REUTERS

7 Seyyed Reza Sadrolhosseini
Regional affairs expert

The recent developments in the West Asian region, especially in the Arab world, are evolving rapidly. The willingness of Arab countries to normalize ties with Syria and the return of their diplomats to Damascus are among the most important changes. The Arab League's failure in resolving the issues of the Arab world and the region has forced the member states to call on the Syrian government to retake its empty seat in the league after 12 years of absence. The stances and measures

adopted by Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, in recent months show the rationality applied by the member states. Inviting Syria to participate in the Arab League summit in Riyadh was made by Saudi authorities, according to Reuters. The invitation can compensate for some of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the union if Damascus responds positively. These favorable developments in the past few months have caused great concern in Israel. Israel has always been concerned

about Syria's influence in the region. Damascus has always been at the forefront of the fight against Israel. That is why the Israelis are trying to delay the return of Damascus to the Arab League in various ways. The attacks on different parts of Syria by Israel show that the regime is very concerned about the normalization of Syria's political relations with the Arab countries and its return to the Arab League. The Arab League can start a new life with the presence of Syria. Its revival is vital

for the Muslim world, as well as for the Palestinians but is a cause for concern for the Israelis because Damascus has always resisted the aggression of the Israelis and has not given up on the cause of Palestinian freedom. Aside from Syria's track record in fighting against Israel, Bashar Assad's government now has the experience of confronting Takfiri terrorism and defeating it. During the 12-year crisis, the Syrian nation and government showed their resiliency by adhering to

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their covenant to stand against Israel's aggressive policies. Now, Syria's return to the Arab League would give new life to the league, which, of course, will bring greater anxiety to Israel. The normalization of diplomatic relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and the likely reestablishment of political relations between Syria and Turkey as well as between Syria and Saudi Arabia are other variables that transform the situation to the benefit of the regional countries and the detriment of Israel.