

Inside Syria's Slaughterhouse



OMAR HAJ KADOUR/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

An aerial view of Sednaya prison, where more than 30,000 people died. Some survivors, below, told of torture and abuse.



Fares al-Diq was a rebel fighter. He was detained at a check-point in Syria in 2019.



Ehab Mouma of Damascus was jailed in 2018 after he joined the rebel uprising.



Munzer al-Uthman of Homs was arrested in 2020 after defecting from military service.



Mohammad al-Abdallah of Homs was arrested in 2020 within months of his two brothers.

Tens of thousands of people perished at Sednaya prison during the Assad regime.

This article is by Christina Goldbaum, Charlie Smart, Helmuth Rosales, Anjali Singhvi and Reham Mourshed.

No place in Syria was more feared than Sednaya prison during the Assad family's decades-long, iron-fisted rule. Situated on a barren hilltop on the outskirts of Damascus, the capital, Sednaya was at the heart of the Assads' extensive system of torture prisons and arbitrary arrests used to crush all dissent. By the end of the nearly 14-year civil war that culminated in December with the fall of President Bashar al-Assad, it had become a haunting symbol of the dictator's ruthlessness. Over the years, the regime's security apparatus swallowed up hundreds of thousands of activists, journalists, students and dissidents from all over Syria — many never to be heard from again. Most prisoners did not expect to make it out of Sednaya alive. They watched as men detained with them withered away or simply lost the will to live. Tens of thousands of others were executed, according to rights groups.

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Top Democrat Holding Out On Mamdani

By ANNIE KARNI

WASHINGTON — In 2021, when India Walton, a political activist supported by the Democratic Socialists of America and the Working Families Party, won an upset victory in the Democratic primary for mayor in Buffalo, one national party leader backed her when most of the establishment would not.

“India Walton won the Democratic primary fair and square and is the nominee,” Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, then the majority leader, said at the time, describing her as an inspiring community leader with a clear progressive vision for her hometown. “I have always believed that the Democratic Party is a big tent.”

These days, Mr. Schumer, the highest-ranking Jewish elected official in the country, the dean of New York’s congressional delegation and an avatar of old New York politics, has drawn criticism from some in his party for holding out on a similar type of endorsement for Zohran Mamdani, the young Democrat running to be the first Muslim mayor of New York City, who has leftist views, particularly on Israel.

Last week, Mr. Schumer met one-on-one with Mr. Mamdani for an hour in Manhattan, a meeting

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On a Mogul’s Yacht, Trump Family Ties Tangle

This article is by Jo Becker, Tariq Panja, Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck.

TRIPOLI, Libya — Massad Boulos traveled to Libya in July as the State Department’s senior Africa adviser. But as he talked to energy executives and government leaders, his other position was no less important. He was also the father-in-law of President Trump’s daughter Tiffany.

That family connection was so

Oil Talks Overlap With Tiffany’s Travels

significant that some Libyan officials had privately taken to calling him Abu Tiffany, Arabic for “Tiffany’s father.”

While Mr. Boulos posed for photographs and announced deals to ramp up Libyan oil and gas production, Tiffany Trump and her

husband, Michael Boulos, were cruising the French Riviera aboard one of the world’s largest superyachts — owned by a major broker of Libyan oil.

The yacht, the Phoenix 2, is a floating palace with two helipads, a swimming pool and an 18-foot bronze figurehead of a flaming phoenix rising from its bow. It is not available to charter. But last year it was renting for over \$1.4 million per week, with the listing

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Taliban Release British Couple in Afghanistan
Barbara Reynolds in Qatar on Friday. She and Peter Reynolds were held nearly 8 months. Page A9.

Trump Pushes For Dismissal Of Prosecutor

U.S. Attorney Leading Investigation of Foes

This article is by Glenn Thrush, Maggie Haberman, Jonah E. Bromwich, Alan Feuer and William K. Rashbaum.

WASHINGTON — President Trump said on Friday that he wanted to see the ouster of a U.S. attorney whose investigations of New York’s attorney general, Letitia James, and the former F.B.I. director James B. Comey have not resulted in charges.

Mr. Trump’s comment came after a high-stakes internal debate raged on Friday over the fate of Erik S. Siebert, the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia — with Mr. Trump’s own appointees at the Justice Department and key Republicans on Capitol Hill arguing to retain the veteran prosecutor.

Mr. Siebert had recently told senior Justice Department officials that investigators found insufficient evidence to bring charges against Ms. James and had also raised concerns about a potential case against Mr. Comey, according to officials familiar with the situation. Mr. Trump has long viewed Ms. James and Mr. Comey as adversaries and has repeatedly pledged retribution against law enforcement officials who pursued him.

The president, speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, initially said he was not following the matter closely. But he instantly belied that comment, saying he wanted Mr. Siebert removed because two Democratic senators from Virginia had approved of Mr. Siebert’s nomination.

“When I saw that he got two senators, two gentlemen that are bad news as far as I’m concerned — when I saw that he got approved by those two men, I said, pull it, because he can’t be any good,” Mr. Trump said. The president did not mention that he nominated Mr. Siebert only after the two senators, Mark Warner and Tim Kaine, had already written Mr. Trump praising him.

When asked if he would fire Mr. Siebert, Mr. Trump responded, “Yeah, I want him out.”

Ms. James, he told reporters, was “very guilty of something.”

The episode was consistent

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PRESSURE BUILT ON MANY FRONTS TO PULL KIMMEL

A FREE SPEECH DEBATE

Regulators, Affiliates and Ad Buyers Put Disney in a Tight Spot

This article is by John Koblin, Brooks Barnes, Benjamin Mullin and Michael M. Grynbaum.

For Robert A. Iger and his leadership team at Disney and ABC, time was running out.

Jimmy Kimmel, one of the company’s biggest stars, was preparing to tape the Wednesday edition of his late-night show in Hollywood at 4:30 p.m. And he had written an opening monologue that would address a cascading political firestorm head-on.

Conservatives had accused Mr. Kimmel of mischaracterizing the politics of the man accused of killing the right-wing activist Charlie Kirk. The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission had just warned ABC of serious consequences, telling the network that “we can do this the easy or the hard way.” And a Texas-based owner of many ABC affiliates was preparing to pull Mr. Kimmel from its stations indefinitely.

Mr. Iger, Disney’s chief executive, and Dana Walden, his head of television, were also hearing from skittish advertisers and employees who had begun to receive threatening messages. When the team reviewed Mr. Kimmel’s planned remarks, they grew concerned that his monologue would only inflame the situation further.

So they made the call: “Jimmy Kimmel Live” would temporarily go dark.

That decision — the product of a spider’s web of interlocking political and financial pressures placed atop one of the country’s biggest corporations — quickly morphed into a flashpoint for free speech in America. Many Democrats, actors and comedians cried foul as right-wing activists celebrated. On a diplomatic trip in Britain, President Trump knocked Mr. Kimmel for “bad ratings” and proclaimed that ABC “should have fired him a long time ago.”

“You can call that free speech or

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Draft Bill Would Let Trump Kill Those He Calls Drug Terrorists

By CHARLIE SAVAGE and ROBERT JIMISON

WASHINGTON — Draft legislation is circulating at the White House and on Capitol Hill that would hand President Trump sweeping power to wage war against drug cartels he deems to be “terrorists,” as well as against any nation he says has harbored or aided them, according to people familiar with the matter.

A wide range of legal specialists have said that U.S. military attacks this month on two boats suspected of smuggling drugs in the Caribbean Sea were illegal. But Mr. Trump has claimed that the Constitution gave him the power he needed to authorize them.

It was not clear who wrote the draft congressional authorization or whether it could pass the Republican-led Congress, but the White House has been passing it around the executive branch.

The broadly worded proposal, which would legally authorize the president to kill people he deems narco-terrorists and attack countries he says helped them, has set off alarm bells in some quarters of the executive branch and on Cap-

President Trump claims constitutional power in two attacks.

itol Hill, according to people who spoke on the condition of anonymity about sensitive internal deliberations.

Three people familiar with the matter said that Representative Cory Mills, a Florida Republican and combat veteran who sits on the Armed Services Committee, was involved in developing the draft. Mr. Mills, a staunch Trump ally, declined to comment on the potential legislation or his role. Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, declined to comment, citing a policy against dis-

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A TikTok Deal May Aid China
The Chinese leader’s willingness to discuss an agreement on the platform suggests that the fate of the app matters less than other issues. PAGE A8

Syrian City Edges Back to Life
Battered by years of bombing and shelling, Deir al-Zour remains a front-line, even as its people struggle to rebuild. PAGE A4

Flattery and Flourish for Trump
The president’s hosts in Britain managed to avoid displays of strife despite the policy disagreements between the countries. News Analysis. PAGE A9

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China exerted its power over rare earth magnets as leverage. Other countries started to make more. PAGE B1

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An Activist’s Base Expands
Since Charlie Kirk’s death, the parents and grandparents of his original followers are discovering his work. Many say they like what they see. PAGE A13

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A panel under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. advised that adults 65 and older receive the shots only after consulting with health providers. PAGE A17

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The region in southern England was where the British writer found herself “as a writer and as a person.” PAGE C7

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