

NEWS ANALYSIS

Some Justices Look Beyond Facts of Case

Focus Put on Theories,
Not Trump’s Conduct

By ADAM LIPTAK

WASHINGTON — Before the Supreme Court heard arguments on Thursday on former President Donald J. Trump’s claim that he is immune from prosecution, his stance was widely seen as a brazen and cynical bid to delay his trial. The practical question in the case, it was thought, was not whether the court would rule against him but whether it would act quickly enough to allow the trial to go forward before the 2024 election.

Instead, members of the court’s conservative majority treated Mr. Trump’s assertion that he could not face charges that he tried to subvert the 2020 election as a weighty and difficult question. They did so, said Pamela Karlan, a law professor at Stanford, by averting their eyes from Mr. Trump’s conduct.

“What struck me most about the case was the relentless efforts by several of the justices on the conservative side not to focus on, consider or even acknowledge the facts of the actual case in front of them,” she said.

They said as much. “I’m not discussing the particular facts of this case,” Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. said, instead posting an alternate reality in which a grant of immunity “is required for the functioning of a stable democratic society, which is something that we all want.”

Immunity is needed, he said, to make sure the incumbent president has reason to “leave office peacefully” after losing an election.

Justice Alito explained: “If an incumbent who loses a very close, hotly contested election knows that a real possibility after leaving office is not that the president is going to be able to go off into a peaceful retirement but that the president may be criminally prosecuted by a bitter political opponent, will that not lead us into a cycle that destabilizes the functioning of our country as a democracy?”

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson took a more straightforward approach. “If the potential for criminal liability is taken off the table, wouldn’t there be a significant risk that future presidents would be emboldened to commit crimes with abandon while they’re in office?” she asked.

Supreme Court arguments are usually dignified and staid, weighed down by impenetrable jargon and focused on subtle shifts in legal doctrine. Thursday’s argument was different.

It featured “some jaw-dropping moments,” said Melissa Murray, a law professor at New York University.

Michael Dorf, a law professor at Cornell, said that “the apparent lack of self-awareness on the

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AMIR HAMJA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Adam Abo Sheriah consoling his wife, Ola, as they looked through photos. “It’s hard to enjoy our life,” she said. “We feel guilty.”

A World Away, Tears for 200 Dead Relatives

By ANNA BETTS and NADA RASHWAN

SPRINGFIELD, N.J. — The call came in around 4 p.m., while Adam Abo Sheriah was still at work in his pharmacy in New Jersey. The voice on the other end was sobbing.

It took a few minutes for Adam to understand: His uncle’s home in Gaza City had been hit by Israeli airstrikes. His parents and his brother’s family were inside, taking shelter after their own homes were bombed. Also struck nearby was a block of multifamily buildings in a neighborhood of Gaza City, home to many relatives and their families, who were hunkered down together.

Watching Gaza With Heavy Hearts From New Jersey

It was the day before Thanksgiving, and Adam’s pharmacy in Paterson was packed with customers, some of them picking up turkeys he was giving away. But Adam couldn’t stay. After the call, he walked out in a daze. His mind swirling with questions, he got in his car and started driving nowhere in particular.

While on the road, he picked up his phone and started calling his family in Gaza. His father didn’t

answer. Neither did his mother. He tried his brothers. Nothing. He tried every relative and friend.

Over the next eight hours, his frantic calls continued, but few details emerged. Soon it was midnight in New Jersey. The sun was just rising in Gaza. Reports were finally starting to come in. His family’s Gaza home was flattened, the whole block was gone. Voices beneath the rubble cried for help, he was told. But there was no way to dig them out. Eventually, the voices fell silent. Adam’s youngest brother, Ahmed, 37, the ambitious, energetic civil engineer, the children’s favorite who brought toys and fireworks, was found dead in the street.

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BRENDAN HOFFMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Ukraine’s West, Honoring Old and New Heroes

A celebration for one of the country’s founders at a school renamed for fallen brothers. Page A4.

Hoping Prison Card Game Cracks a Cold Case

By REBECCA CARBALLO

People incarcerated in southern Mississippi have been receiving new sets of playing cards that they can use to pass the time, but the images on those cards are not of the typical jacks, queens and kings of other game sets. Instead, they feature people whose murders or disappearances have been unsolved for years.

The authorities hope that people awaiting trial or serving sen-

Decks Spotlight Details From Investigations

tences will recognize someone while playing with the cards and offer information to help solve some of those crimes.

The Mississippi Coast Crime Stoppers, a nonprofit that helps law enforcement generate tips in unsolved cases, are distributing

2,500 decks. The card sets cost about \$6,000 to make and were made possible by a grant from Season of Justice, a nonprofit that provides funding for investigative agencies and families looking to solve cold cases.

“We have nothing to lose,” said Lori Massey, the chief executive director of Mississippi Coast Crime Stoppers. “These cases are sitting on investigators’ desks. We feel like one lead is better than no

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What Message Does That Soup Dumpling Hold?

By YAN ZHUANG

Beijing beer made with American hops, to highlight the trade relationship between the two countries. Tibetan food, to send a human rights message. Mushrooms with possible hallucinogenic properties, just because they taste good.

Where, what and how American dignitaries eat when they visit China is a serious matter. Choices of restaurants and dishes are rife

Food Has Symbolism in Blinken’s China Trip

with opportunities for geopolitical symbolism, as well as controversy and mockery. Chopstick skills — or a lack thereof — can be a sign of cultural competence or illiteracy.

An exorbitantly expensive meal can make an official look out of touch. Too cheap or informal, and

you risk appearing undignified. Authenticity, history, cooking technique and taste can all affect the perception of a meal choice.

When Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken started a trip through China on Wednesday, part of the Biden administration’s efforts to stabilize the relationship

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SMALL STEPS Secretary of state visits China’s leader. PAGE A9



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Reviving a Silicon Valley Icon

Can Xerox’s Palo Alto Research Center recapture its glory days in the personal computing revolution? PAGE B1

Hopes Dim for Rate Cuts

As inflation stays stubborn, the Federal Reserve isn’t expected to act until later in the year — if at all. PAGE B1

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Taking Heat for Repeal Vote

On social media, three Arizona G.O.P. lawmakers are being accused of being baby killers and traitors after voting to repeal an abortion law. PAGE A10

New Battery Alerts Parents

Energizer’s new product comes nearly two years after a report warned that children were swallowing batteries at an alarming rate. PAGE A11

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Busywork Has Its Benefits

Virtual assistants intended to help parents manage their family lives offer some unexpected lessons. PAGE C1



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Draft’s Winners and Losers

In the first round of the N.F.L. draft, it seemed like most everyone was in the market for a quarterback. PAGE B8

Inside the Exit of the Coyotes

While the team’s move to Utah left an opening for the former owner to reclaim it, the path will be challenging. PAGE B7

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Destruction of Gaza’s Hospitals

The Israeli military’s bombardment and invasion of Gaza have decimated its health care system in a way that aid groups and international bodies are calling “systematic.” PAGE A6

Novels Uplifting East Germany

Jenny Erpenbeck became a writer when her childhood and her country, the German Democratic Republic, disappeared, swallowed by the West. The Saturday Profile. PAGE A8

OPINION A20-21

Mara Gay

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THIS WEEKEND

Art Deepens Connections

Museums are rethinking their strategy and purpose, and how they use their settings. Special Section.



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