



SAID KHATIB/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Craters pockmarked Rafah, a city in southern Gaza, after bombardment by the Israeli military on Monday. Over a million Palestinians have crowded into the city.

Ballots, Balloons and Batman: Indonesia’s ‘Democracy Party’

This article is by **Muktita Suhartono**, **Sui-Lee Wee** and **Hasya Nindita**.

JAKARTA, Indonesia — The young women and men moved from booth to booth, asking questions about the political hopefuls’ track records and visions for the country. A few steps away, first-time voters practiced casting their ballots in pretend voting booths. And onstage, talk show guests discussed how to make an informed choice in backing a candidate.

This gathering of more than a thousand people one recent Sunday in Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, was a prelude to a celebration that is widely known here as “Pesta Demokrasi,” or Democracy Party.

Otherwise known as Election Day, it’s when tens of millions of people across this vast archipela-

go of thousands of islands head to polling stations that are sometimes decorated with balloons, garlands and flowers, and staffed by officials dressed up as Spider-Man, Batman, Thor or other superheroes. After voting for presidential, parliamentary and local legislative candidates, people camp out near their polling places with food as they wait for early counts to trickle in. The next “party” is on Wednesday.

Free and fair elections in Indonesia were unthinkable as recently as the mid-1990s, when it was still under the brutal rule of Suharto. But after his fall in 1998, the country emerged as the world’s third-largest democracy. Partly because Election Day is a national holiday, voter turnout has consistently been among the highest in the world and reached a record 80 percent in 2019. With the minimum voting age set at 17, the

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NEWS ANALYSIS *A Potential End to the U.S. Security Umbrella?*

By **PETER BAKER**

Soon after former President Donald J. Trump took office, his staff explained how NATO’s mutual defense obligations worked.

“You mean, if Russia attacked Lithuania, we would go to war with Russia?” he responded. “That’s crazy.”

Mr. Trump has never believed in the fundamental one-for-all-and-all-for-one concept of the Atlantic alliance. Indeed, he spent much of his four-year presidency undermining it while strong-arming members into keeping their commitments to spend more on their own militaries with the threat that he would not come to their aid otherwise.

But he took it to a whole new level over the weekend, declaring at a rally in South Carolina that not only would he not defend

Trump Poised to Favor Foes Over Friends in a Second Term

European countries he deemed to be in arrears from an attack by Russia, but that he would go so far as to “encourage” Russia “to do whatever the hell they want” against them. Never before has a president of the United States — even a former one aspiring to reclaim the office — suggested that he would incite an enemy to attack American allies.

Some may discount that as typical Trump rally bluster or write it off as a poor attempt at humor. Others may even cheer the hard line against supposedly deadbeat allies who in this view have taken advantage of Ameri-

can friendship for too long. But Mr. Trump’s rhetoric foreshadows potentially far-reaching changes in the international order if he wins the White House again in November with unpredictable consequences.

What’s more, Mr. Trump’s riff once again raised uncomfortable questions about his taste in friends. Encouraging Russia to attack NATO allies, even if he was not fully serious, is a stunning statement that highlights his odd affinity for President Vladimir V. Putin, who has already proved his willingness to invade neighboring countries that do not have the protection of NATO.

Long averse to alliances of any kind, Mr. Trump in a second term could effectively end the security umbrella that has guarded friends in Europe, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East for

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RAID BY ISRAELIS FREES 2 HOSTAGES IN SOUTHERN GAZA

67 PALESTINIANS DEAD

Wave of Attacks Prompts Fears in Rafah of a Full Invasion

By **PATRICK KINGSLEY**
and **HIBA YAZBEK**

JERUSALEM — Israeli special operations forces raided a building in the southern Gazan city of Rafah early Monday and freed two hostages held by Hamas, the military said, as Israel launched a wave of attacks that killed dozens of Palestinians in the city, according to the Gazan health ministry.

The nighttime operation — only the second time Israeli forces said they had rescued captives in Gaza — prompted elation in Israel, where the fate of more than 100 people kidnapped during the Hamas-led attack on Oct. 7 has become one of the country’s highest priorities.

But in Rafah, the raid fueled fear, mourning and panic among more than a million Palestinians who have crowded into the city, seeking refuge from Israeli military actions farther north. Palestinians feared that the raid presaged a full-fledged ground invasion into Rafah and that the high death toll foretold much more mourning ahead.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has said that Israeli ground forces are preparing to enter Rafah with the goal of eliminating Hamas battalions there. The prospect of ground battles in the city, which is bracketed by a closed Egyptian border and invading Israeli forces, has created worldwide alarm over the risks to civilians who have nowhere else to flee.

The intensity of the rescue operation and the death toll made clear Mr. Netanyahu’s determination to press ahead with the southern offensive, despite criticism from the United States and other allies, and pressure to reduce civilian casualties and destruction.

At 1:49 a.m. on Monday, Israeli special forces broke into a building where the two hostages, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Louis Har, 70, were being held, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the military’s chief spokesman, said at a news conference.

About a minute later, Israeli soldiers

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Welcoming of Migrants, Denver Begins to Buckle Under a Surge

By **MIRIAM JORDAN**

DENVER — In his first six months in office last summer, the mayor of Denver, Mike Johnston, managed to get more than 1,200 homeless people off the streets and into housing. That seemed like a fitting feat for a city that prides itself on its compassion.

It would turn out to be a footnote compared with the humanitarian crisis that Denver would soon face as thousands of migrants flooded the city, many of them bused from the southern border by Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas and almost all of them in need of shelter and support.

By last month, Denver, a city of 750,000, had received nearly 40,000 migrants, the most per capita of any city in the nation, even as the flow of migrants slowed in the deep chill of winter. And the city has begun to feel the same sort of strains that have confronted New York and Chicago as they contended with their own migrant influxes.

Denver, the state capital and the center of a sprawling metropolitan area of more than 3 million people, has spent more than \$42 million on the migrants. If expen-



JIMENA PECK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Shelter residents playing outside their rooms in Denver and experiencing snow for the first time.

ditures continue at the current pace of \$3.5 million a week, the crisis could cost the city about \$180 million in 2024, or 10 percent or more of its annual budget.

The city has begun discharging

dozens of families from hotels that it rented to house them temporarily, creating fresh hardship for those being displaced. And this week, the city will begin imposing a first round of budget cuts unre-

lated to migrant services, starting with reductions in parks and motor vehicle services.

Like mayors in New York, Chicago and elsewhere, Mr. Johnston

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If You Don’t Want Valentines, There’s Always Sweet Revenge

By **ISABELLA KWAI**

Lilly Calman is not in the mood this Valentine’s Day for the flowers, chocolates or a romantic dinner for two, especially after a recent breakup.

“I’m very angry,” said Ms. Calman, 26, adding that it had been painful to see all the holiday paraphernalia in store aisles.

She found a more fitting outlet for her mood this year: a fundraiser for the San Antonio Zoo that will symbolically name a roach or rodent after an ex and feed it to one of the zoo’s animals.

“The visual image of him getting eaten by a Komodo dragon is pretty satisfying,” said Ms. Calman, who donated \$25 for the rat option. She is hoping the zoo sends her a video so she can host a screening with a friend. “I love reptiles. I think it’s cool.”

The annual campaign has raised over \$235,000 since the zoo first ran it in 2020, underscoring the appeal of alternative Valentine’s Day rituals for people who are uninterested in the coupledness of it all.



SHIRLEY YU FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Some love a cute tradition; others condemn the holiday.

The traditions of Valentine’s Day bring strong feelings, both for and against. Do you appreciate a cute tradition? Or do you hold it in contempt as a consumerist scam? Critics have blamed it for upholding a narrow-minded model of relationships as heterosexual and monogamous.

But the holiday, and its spending, isn’t going anywhere; a majority of people in the United States plan to celebrate or mark

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China’s Tesla Killer

BYD, the leading Chinese electric vehicle company, has posted two years of million-car growth in sales.

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Figma Picks Up the Pieces

After the \$20 billion sale of the design platform to Adobe fell through, the company must find a new path.

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Rising Risks of Wildfire Smoke

Climate change is amplifying wildfires, and it’s very difficult to mitigate the health and quality-of-life harms of spreading air pollution.

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Political Talk at the Barbershop

A friendship offers clues to one of the election’s biggest questions: Can Democrats win back Latino men?

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Cholera Outbreak Hits Africa

The disease is raging in five countries. Experts blame a lack of vaccines, and poor water and sewer systems.

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Deadly Look

Archaeologists working in Egypt recently unearthed three funerary masks believed to be at least 1,800 years old.

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Telling All About Kissing

A married pair of researchers maintains that smooching was a widespread and well-established part of romance in the Middle East since at least the late third millennium B.C.

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A Super Bowl Spectacle

A dramatic game paired with Las Vegas flashiness and celebrity star power helps explain how sports stands apart as entertainment.

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War Pilot and Entrepreneur

The son of Jewish immigrants, Si Spiegel served in World War II and created patents to produce artificial Christmas trees. He was 99.

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Jennifer Weiner

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In a Twyla Tharp Mind-Set

For her latest program at the Joyce Theater, the one-of-a-kind choreographer presents two new dances and a revival of “Ocean’s Motion.”

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