



YUSUKE FUKUHARA/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, VIA YOMIURI SHIMBUN

Powerful Earthquake Jolts Japan
There were reports of people being trapped under collapsed buildings. The quake initially raised fears of a tsunami. Page A7.

Mixed Verdicts
In Police Trials
Signal Unease

**By AUDRA D. S. BURCH
and KELLEY MANLEY**

A few days before Christmas, a jury in Washington cleared three Tacoma police officers of criminal charges in the death of Manuel “Manny” Ellis, a 33-year-old Black man who died in police custody in 2020 after pleading that he could not breathe.

The next day, on Dec. 22, a jury in Colorado convicted two paramedics of criminally negligent homicide in the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who died in police custody in 2019 after officers subdued him and medics injected him with the powerful sedative ketamine.

In the three years since the murder of George Floyd, whose death in police custody ignited a national movement against police brutality, prosecutors have charged the police and emergency medical workers in a number of high-profile cases.

The result has been a mixed bag of verdicts: convictions, acquittals and in one case, a mistrial. Civil rights activists and legal experts say the different outcomes reflect a country still struggling with how to view cases of police use of lethal force, and shifting public sentiment on law enforcement and safety.

“Police accountability is still up for debate. Even with actual evidence, even with body cam footage, we’re still in a place where we cannot be certain that an officer’s conviction for wrongdoing will take place through our judicial system,” Charles Coleman Jr., a civil rights lawyer, former Brooklyn prosecutor and MSNBC legal analyst, said

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How Rikers Became Warehouse for Mentally Ill

**By JAN RANSOM
and AMY JULIA HARRIS**

One night in fall 2015, an 18-year-old woman was standing on a subway platform in the Bronx when a homeless man named James Dolo came up from behind and used his hands to push her onto the tracks, the police said, injuring her.

Jailed on an attempted murder charge, Mr. Dolo, then 38, soon was seated in front of a court evaluator for a review of his competency to stand trial. Mr. Dolo smelled of urine, the evaluator noted, had described a history of psychiatric hospitalizations and did not seem to understand the gravity of what he was accused of doing.

The evaluator marked him down as unfit, citing schizophrenia, and a judge ordered Mr. Dolo committed to a state forensic psychiatric hospital — a secure facility for incarcerated people — to be restored to mental competency. He spent nearly two years there before he was shuttled to a public hospital in Manhattan, and then to the city jails on Rikers Island, and then to the forensic hospital again.

Now, eight years later, having never been convicted of a crime in the subway shoving, he is back on Rikers Island, where guards once found him sitting in his own excrement and refusing to eat or leave his cell.

Mr. Dolo’s case, which has not been previously reported, illustrates one reason Rikers Island has become a warehouse for thousands of people with psychiatric problems: Many detainees with severe mental illness have moved back and forth between the jails and state forensic psychiatric facilities for months or even years before standing trial. Some have spent more time in this cycle than they might have served in prison had they been convicted.

Records show that more than half of the people in city custody — some 3,000 men and women — have been diagnosed with a mental illness, and, on any given day, hundreds of them are awaiting evaluations or in line for beds at state forensic psychiatric hospital.

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JOSÉ A. ALVARADO JR. FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

More than half of the people in city custody have been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder.

Will Message
About Mideast
Magnify Pain?

Agonizing Choice for a
Refugee Agency

By ELI SASLOW

He had spent his entire career attending to the horrors of terrorism and war, and now Chris George, 70, believed it was his responsibility to act again. He sat at his desk inside Connecticut’s largest refugee resettlement agency, trying to write a public statement about the violence in Israel and Gaza that had resurfaced traumas among his staff, and in his own personal history.

“We believe that all human life is precious and should be protected,” he wrote in mid-October. He read over the sentence, and it sounded obvious and weak. He set the draft aside for a few days and then tried again.

“We condemn, in the strongest terms, the killing of all innocent civilians,” he wrote, but that phrasing seemed almost clinical — so remote and impersonal compared with how he felt.

He had spent several months in the 1970s living and volunteering on Kibbutz Nirim, where dozens of Hamas terrorists broke through the wall on Oct. 7 to kidnap and murder civilians. He had also lived for many years as an American expatriate and a Quaker in Gaza, learning Arabic and working on behalf of oppressed Palestinian children, and now thousands were being killed by Israel’s bombings.

And then there were the Israeli hostages still being held captive at the center of the conflict. George understood at least a little about what that was like, too. He was the first American ever kidnapped in Gaza, in 1989, when three Palestinian refugees abducted him and demanded that Israel release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for his life. The extremists held George at gunpoint in a safe house for 29 hours before eventually releasing him unharmed, and then instead of retreating into fear or hatred, George returned to America and devoted his career to helping refugees start new lives and heal from conflict.

“One violation of human rights does not justify another,” he wrote, in another attempt at a statement on behalf of his nonprofit, Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services, in New Haven. “It doesn’t matter whether we call it a cease-fire or a humanitarian pause. Let’s not quibble over terminology. The killing must stop.”

Even at the risk of inviting controversy, he felt compelled to speak up on behalf of the people

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COURT OVERTURNS
NETANYAHU’S BID
TO LIMIT JUSTICES

ISRAEL MAY FACE CRISIS

8-7 Ruling Could Imperil
Emergency Coalition
as War Rages

This article is by **Isabel Kershner, Aaron Boxerman and Thomas Fuller.**

JERUSALEM — Israel’s Supreme Court on Monday struck down a law limiting its own powers, a momentous step in the legal and political crisis that gripped the country before the war with Hamas, and pitted the court against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s right-wing government.

The court’s 8-7 ruling has the potential to throw Israel’s national emergency government, formed



POOL PHOTO BY ABIR SULTAN

Benjamin Netanyahu

after the Oct. 7 attacks, into disarray and reignite the grave domestic turmoil that began a year ago over the Netanyahu government’s judicial overhaul plan. Mass protests brought the country to a near standstill at times, in one of the deepest political upheavals Israel had faced in its 75 years, and led to warnings of possible civil war.

The court, sitting with a full panel of all 15 of its justices for the first time in its history, rejected the law passed by Parliament in July that barred judges from using a particular legal standard to overrule decisions made by government ministers.

The decision comes at a precarious time for Israel, deeply engaged in a brutal war in Gaza and under nearly daily rocket fire from Iranian-backed militants along its northern border. It is

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PULLING OUT Analysts say Israel could be signaling a shift to a more limited war. PAGE A6

For 2024, Expect State Debates
Over A.I., Gender and Firearms

By RICK ROJAS

ATLANTA — As Americans have engaged in fierce disagreement over gender expression and sexual orientation, the costs and reach of racism, and the danger and opportunity presented by rapid technological advancement, state legislatures have been one of the most visible and influential arenas for these debates.

It will probably be no different in 2024.

Lawmakers in dozens of states will soon be returning to work, weighing in on some of the most divisive issues confronting the country, including access to transition-related care for young transgender people, abortion and gun rights.

Lawmakers will also consider new regulations on artificial intelligence, a digital frontier that security experts have described as a serious potential threat — and one where state lawmakers could play a vital role by adopting safeguards that could be a model for the federal government to eventually follow.

“Consensus has yet to emerge, but Congress can look to state legislatures — often referred to as the laboratories of democracy — for inspiration regarding how to address the opportunities and challenges posed by A.I.,” said a report published in November from the Brennan Center for Justice, a non-partisan law and poverty think tank.

Several states, including Florida, South Carolina and New Hampshire, are considering legislation that would govern the use of artificial intelligence in political advertising, particularly “deepfake” technology, which could enable the voice and likeness of a

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Bright New Rest Stops for Sunday Drive, but Maybe Pack a Lunch

By ANDREW KEH

Kelli Bogacz had just spent a week camping in the Adirondack Mountains, and as she and her husband negotiated the five-hour drive back home to Buffalo, all they wanted was something to eat.

Halfway through their journey, an oasis appeared: Chittenango Travel Plaza, a newly renovated rest stop on Interstate 90, just east of Syracuse. Yet as they pulled their pickup truck and 23-foot camper into the parking lot, they sensed a problem.

It was a Sunday afternoon last August. The only restaurant inside the rest stop was a Chick-fil-A. And, as anyone halfway familiar with the American fast food landscape knows, Chick-fil-A is closed on Sundays.

**Chick-fil-A Policy Has
Stomachs Rumbling**

“So it was useless,” said Ms. Bogacz, 54, a sixth-grade teacher. “Utterly useless.”

The 27 rest stops that line the 570-mile-long New York Thruway are being systematically renovated now as part of a \$450 million private investment plan. The project, which kicked off two years ago, has brought freshly gleaming facilities and a host of new businesses, like Shake Shack, Panda Express and, yes, Chick-fil-A.

But the developments have left some motorists, like Ms. Bogacz, frustrated and hungry — and now

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Happy New Year, Goddess
Where Rio’s revelers ring in the year, devotees of Afro-Brazilian religions make offerings to the sea. PAGE A7

‘I Do’ in a Moscow Prison
An authoritarian state in the midst of a crackdown on freedom of expression can turn young love into a test. PAGE A4

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Trump’s Iowa Ground Game
The former president is leading by large margins in the state, but his campaign wants to make sure his supporters turn out for the caucuses. PAGE A8

A Stopover in New Jersey
Asylum seekers have been dropped off at train stops to sidestep an order limiting their arrival in New York. PAGE A14

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Players, executives and other influential people in an 11-month sport offered their ideas. PAGE B5



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Carrie Cracknell’s staging of “Carmen” at the Met updates the opera to present-day America. PAGE C1

What the Critics Want to See
Our writers are looking forward to the shows of 2024, including an early “Mad Max” and a return of “The Wiz.” PAGE C5

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(Trying to) Fill Out FAFSA
The new, simplified version of the college student financial aid form was supposed to become available in December. It was, in fits and starts. And submitting it proved elusive. PAGE B1

Mickey and Minnie in the Wild
The classic cartoon characters from “Steamboat Willie” have entered the public domain, along with Tigger and thousands of other copyrighted works. They may never be the same. PAGE B1

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Debbie Dingell PAGE A17



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A Puzzling Palace
George and Roxanne Miller, proud owners of the world’s largest collection of mechanical puzzles, have moved their treasures to a castle in Italy. PAGE D1

