



AHMAD HASABALLAH/GETTY IMAGES

Hungry crowds in Gaza waited to get a meal last week. The food shortage is so extreme that it meets the first criteria of a famine.

In Philippines, Impoverishment Is a Legacy of U.S. Colonialism

By PETER S. GOODMAN  
MINDANAO, Philippines — Rodino Sawan stepped into the wire harness and dug his toes into the muddy track that threads the sweltering plantation. He pushed forward, straining against the cargo trailing behind him: 25 bunches of freshly harvested bananas strung from hooks attached to an assembly line.  
Six days a week, Mr. Sawan, 55, a father of five, tows batches of fruit that weigh 1,500 pounds to a nearby processing plant, often as planes buzz overhead, misting down pesticides. He returns home with aches in his back and daily wages of 380 Philippine pesos, or about \$6.80.  
One day in 2022, the plantation bosses fired him. The next day, they hired him back into the same role as a contractor, cutting his pay by 25 percent.  
“Now, we can barely afford rice,” Mr. Sawan said. Still, he continued to show up, resigned to the reality that, on the island of Min-

As Neighbors Prosper via Manufacturing, Farming Persists  
danao, as in much of the rural Philippines, plantation work is often the only work.  
“It’s an insult,” he said. “But there’s no other job, so what can I do?”  
The desperation confronting tens of millions of landless Filipinos stems in part from policies imposed by the powers that controlled the archipelago for centuries — first Spain, and then the United States.  
In a region defined by upward mobility through manufacturing, the Philippines stands out as a nation still heavily reliant on agriculture — a legacy of outside rule. Nearly 80 years after the country secured independence, the colonial era still shapes the struc-

Continued on Page A8

From One of ‘Central Park Five’ To Member of the City Council

By KATHERINE ROSMAN  
Yusef Salaam stood at the front of the City Council Chamber in Lower Manhattan with his right hand raised and his left hand on the Quran held by his wife. It was the one that his mother gave him when he was 15 years old and standing trial for a crime he did not commit. Its pages, filled with notes and bookmarks, were kept intact by a cloth cover that Mr. Salaam made during nearly seven years in prison.  
Surrounded by relatives including his mother, sister and some of his children, Mr. Salaam was asked by Michael McSweeney, the city clerk, to repeat an oath.  
With each passage that Mr. McSweeney recited and Mr. Salaam repeated, their voices took on volume and urgency: “I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of New York,” Mr. Salaam said. “I will faithfully discharge the duties of the office of council member of the ninth district, in



ELIAS WILLIAMS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Yusef Salaam was exonerated.  
the borough and county of New York, in the City of New York, according to the best of my ability.”  
“Council Member Salaam,” Mr. McSweeney said, “Congratulations.”  
Mr. Salaam’s family broke into cheers. He placed his hand over his heart.  
It was one day and 21 years after his exoneration from a first-degree rape conviction in a case so

Continued on Page A15

Cats Filled This Chilean Prison. Then, the Inmates Fell in Love.

By JACK NICAS  
SANTIAGO, Chile — Some say they were first brought in to take out the rats. Others contend they wandered in on their own.  
What everyone can agree on — including those who have lived or worked at Chile’s largest prison the longest — is that the cats were here first.  
For decades, they have walked along the prison’s high walls, sunbathed on the metal roof and skittered between cells crowded with 10 men each. To prison officials, they were a peculiarity of sorts, and mostly ignored. The cats kept multiplying into the hundreds.  
Then prison officials realized something else: The feline residents were not only good for the rat problem. They were also good for the inmates.  
“They’re our companions,” said Carlos Nuñez, a balding prisoner showing off a 2-year-old tabby he named Feita, or Ugly, from behind prison bars. While caring for multiple cats during his 14-year sentence for home burglary, he said he discovered



CRISTOBAL OLIVARES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The largest prison in Chile is home to about 300 cats, whom inmates informally adopt and care for.

their special essence, compared with, say, a cellmate or even a dog.  
“A cat makes you worry about it, feed it, take care of it, give it special attention,” he said. “When

we were outside and free, we never did this. We discovered it in here.”  
Known simply as “the Pen,” the 180-year-old main penitentiary in Santiago, Chile’s capital,

has long been known as a place where men live in cages and cats roam free. What is now more clearly understood is the positive effect of the prison’s roughly 300

Continued on Page A9

Inside Accounts of Strains Between U.S. and Israelis

Half of Gazans Face Risk of Starvation, the U.N. Warns

This article is by Liam Stack, Goya Gupta and Abu Bakr Bashir.  
Walaah Zaiter’s four children have been hungry for weeks, but she can barely find them food.  
They ask for sandwiches, fruit juice and homemade Palestinian dishes like she used to cook before the war began. In a fleeting moment of internet access, she said, she once caught the children huddled around her phone to watch a YouTube video of someone eating French fries.  
The most they can hope for these days, she said in a recent telephone interview, is a can of peas, some cheese and an energy bar distributed as a family’s rations by the United Nations once a week in Rafah, a city in southern Gaza where they fled to in early December to escape Israeli bombardment farther north. It is not nearly enough to feed her family of seven.  
“It’s a daily struggle,” said Ms. Zaiter, 37, whose children range in age from 9 months to 13 years. “You feel you are under pressure and hopeless, and you cannot provide anything.”  
Israel’s war in Gaza has created a humanitarian catastrophe, with half of the population of about 2.2 million at risk of starvation and 90 percent saying that they regularly go without food for a whole day, the United Nations said in a recent report.  
Arif Husain, chief economist at the World Food Program, said the humanitarian disaster in Gaza was among the worst he had ever seen. The territory appears to meet at least the first criteria of a famine, with 20 percent of the population facing an extreme lack of food, he said.  
“I’ve been doing this for about 20 years,” Mr. Husain said. “I’ve been to pretty much any conflict, whether Yemen, whether it was South Sudan, northeast Nigeria, Ethiopia, you name it. And I have never seen anything like this, both in terms of its scale, its magnitude, but also at the pace that this has unfolded.”  
Eylon Levy, an Israeli government spokesman, contended that Israel did not stand in the way of humanitarian assistance and blamed Hamas, the Palestinian

War Tests Ties More Than Any Episode in Past 50 Years

This article is by Peter Baker, Edward Wong, Julian E. Barnes and Isabel Kershner.  
WASHINGTON — President Biden was getting ready to leave the White House for an audacious flight to Israel to demonstrate solidarity after the Oct. 7 terrorist attack when suddenly the trip seemed to be falling apart before it even began.  
An explosion at a Gaza hospital had reportedly killed or wounded hundreds, the Palestinians were blaming Israel, and Arab leaders were refusing to meet with Mr. Biden when he arrived in the region. The president summoned advisers to the Treaty Room on the second floor of the White House family quarters to answer the question: Should he still go?  
A robust debate broke out between his national security and political advisers. Some in the room urged Mr. Biden to scrap the trip. It was not clear what could be accomplished. It might not even be safe. What if Hamas launched rockets at Ben-Gurion International Airport when Air Force One approached? Where would the president land then?  
Others argued that he needed to go anyway. He had already announced the visit. They should not lurch from one decision to another. And preliminary U.S. intelligence indicated that Israel was not responsible for the hospital explosion.  
Finally, Mr. Biden weighed in. “I’ve got to go,” he said. “I’ve got to see these guys face to face.”  
That decision, perhaps more than any other, would come to define Mr. Biden’s approach to what has become the most divisive foreign policy crisis of his presidency. He had to go. He had to see them face to face. With that, he effectively took ownership of the war that would follow in all its overpowering brutality, managing it personally at great political risk to himself at home and abroad.  
No other episode in the past half-century has tested the ties be-

Continued on Page A6

RED SEA CLASH Iranian-backed Houthi gunmen fired on American helicopters, officials said. PAGE A6

Ex-Pentagon Officials Flocking To Join Venture Capital Firms

By ERIC LIPTON  
SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — When Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III and other top officials assembled for an event last month at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, they walked into a lesson in how the high-stakes world of Pentagon lobbying is being altered by the rise of defense technology start-ups.  
Inside, at this elite gathering near Los Angeles of senior leaders from government and the arms industry, was a rapidly growing group of participants: former Pentagon officials and military officers who have joined venture capital firms and are trying to use their connections in Washington to cash in on the potential to sell a new generation of weapons.  
They represent a new path through the revolving door that has always connected the Defense Department and the military contracting business.  
Retiring generals and departing top Pentagon officials once migrated regularly to the big established weapons makers like Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

Urging U.S. to Fund Start-Ups Designing Weapons of Future

Now they are increasingly flocking to venture capital firms that have collectively pumped billions of dollars into Silicon Valley-style start-ups offering the Pentagon new war-fighting tools like autonomous killer drones, hypersonic jets and space surveillance equipment.  
This new route to the private sector is one indicator of the ways in which the United States is trying to become more agile in harnessing technological advances to maintain military superiority over China and other rivals.  
But the close ties between venture capital firms and Defense Department decision makers have also put a new twist on long-running questions about industry access and influence at a time when the Pentagon is under pressure to rethink how it allocates its huge

Continued on Page A12

Setting Sights on Chinatown  
Such areas in the U.S. and Canada have long been squeezed by development. Philadelphia’s may be next. PAGE A10

New Laws on the Books  
Many state laws take effect on the first day of 2024, including new rules on gun safety and bans on book bans. PAGE A11

Russia Pounds Ukrainian City  
Moscow said it had struck Kharkiv with missiles in retaliation for what it said was a deadly Ukrainian air assault on the Russian city of Belgorod. PAGE A5

Congo’s President Re-elected  
Felix Tshisekedi is declared the winner in an election marred by delays and accusations of fraud. PAGE A9

A High-Energy Comedian  
Shecky Greene was a Las Vegas institution known for going to great lengths for laughs. He was 97. PAGE B7

A Culture of Fun  
Luna Luna, an art carnival that debuted in 1987 in Hamburg, is now in Los Angeles. Above, Frankie Tan, a mime. PAGE C1

Testing the Temperature  
The Climate Museum has popped up once again in SoHo, where it hopes to find a permanent home. PAGE C1

A Return-to-the-Office Gamble  
The City of London, Britain’s historic financial district, is transforming its skyline with “best in class” office towers. It is considered a huge bet on the future of the workplace. PAGE B1

For Love, and Yes, Money  
Before moving in together, a couple should have serious, nonjudgmental talks about their financial histories and goals. Here’s how to jump-start those conversations. Modern Love. PAGE B1

OPINION A18-19  
Michael Romano PAGE A18

Best Teams Money Could Buy  
The four programs in Monday’s College Football Playoff semifinals used cash payments from fan “collectives” to build their rosters. PAGE D1

