

Desperation and death surrounded aid delivery in Gaza

This article is by Steve Hendrix, Miriam Berger, Hajar Harb, Imogen Piper and Jonathan Baran

JERUSALEM — It was hunger that drove Ibrahim al-Rifi from his house in Gaza City at 2 in the morning Thursday. It had been months since he could find bread for his wife and daughters in war-ravaged northern Gaza. Flour sold for close to \$1,000 a bag, and even the animal feed many had turned to was running out. Some people are eating grass, the United Nations has said.

Sides differ on cause of stampede that left 100 dead, 700 injured

Rifi and two cousins set out in the darkness on rumors that aid trucks were on the way. As for thousands of others, hunger overcame their fear of the obvious dangers from Israeli troops and desperate crowds. Hours later, after one of the

most horrific episodes in a war that has produced so many, Rifi returned with hands empty but bloody. Both cousins were injured and Rifi had had to cower amid the dead in an early morning melee that erupted when the rare aid convoy passed an Israeli military checkpoint and entered Gaza City. Over 100 people were killed and 700 injured, according to Palestinian officials, after thousands of civilians swarmed the trucks and Israeli troops opened fire. Much remains unclear, however, with contradictory claims from

Israelis and Palestinians about what prompted a stampede around the trucks, the role of Israeli gunfire, and how many people were shot as distinct from being injured by the crush of people. On Friday, France, Italy and Germany called for an independent investigation into what happened, following earlier criticism by French President Emmanuel Macron of the actions of Israeli soldiers. President Biden said Friday that the United States would launch an airdrop campaign to

deliver aid to Gaza.

Thursday morning's deadly event — unfolding as the enclave passed the milestone of 30,000 killed in the war — seemed to fulfill growing warnings that ongoing combat and spiraling deprivation are forcing Gazans into a state of utter chaos.

"I went to bring them food and I returned laden with death and blood," Rifi said.

SEE GAZA ON A8

Today's WorldView: Tragedy encapsulates horror of moment. **A8**

Jan. 6 rioters' penalties in doubt

COURT NIXES HIGHER SENTENCING RANGE

More than 100 convicted of participation affected

BY RACHEL WEINER AND SPENCER S. HSU

More than 100 people convicted of participation in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol may have to be resentenced after a federal appeals court Friday overturned a sentencing enhancement used to help determine their punishments.

The decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit came in the case of retired Air Force Lt. Col. Larry R. Brock Jr., who had appealed his felony conviction of obstructing the work of Congress that day. Former president Donald Trump faces the same charge.

The court, a panel of three Democratic appointees, did not overturn the conviction. But it said that a lower court judge erred in deciding that Brock should face a stiffer sentence for "substantial interference with the administration of justice," ruling that the penalty does not apply to crimes committed at the Capitol.

At least 100 people convicted in connection with the Jan. 6 attack have had their punishments shaped by that enhancement, and

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U.S. will airdrop supplies to enclave

Biden presses Israel as cease-fire negotiations remain mired in details

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

President Biden on Friday authorized U.S. military airdrops of humanitarian aid to Gaza, reflecting his growing frustration with Israel's military operations, the dire situation of more than 2 million Palestinians under siege inside the enclave and the failure of the United States and its negotiating partners to forge a deal between Israel and Hamas to stop the fighting.

In addition to the airdrops, which officials said would begin within days, "we're going to insist that Israel facilitate more trucks and more routes to get more and more people the help they need," Biden told reporters gathered in the White House for his meeting with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

"No excuses, because the truth is aid flowing to Gaza is nowhere nearly enough," he said. "Innocent lives are on the line and children's lives are on the line. ... I won't stand by, we won't let up and we're trying to pull out every stop we can to get more assistance in."

Humanitarian organizations have reported that Gazan civilians are in increasingly desperate straits, warning that hundreds of thousands of people are on the brink of famine and epidemic disease as aid delivered by truck convoy has been slowed and often intentionally blocked by Israel's military operations. The administration has pushed the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to facilitate more assistance and adopt precision military tactics as it seeks to destroy Hamas.

The airdrop announcement came a day after more than 100 Palestinians died in northern Gaza on Thursday after a huge crowd swarmed an arriving convoy of food. It remained unclear, amid conflicting narratives,

SEE AIRDROPS ON A9



MAXIM SHIPENKOV/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

In Moscow, cries of 'Navalny! Navalny!'

Thousands of Russians turn out for opposition leader's funeral despite heavy police presence

BY FRANCESCA EBEL, ROBYN DIXON, MARY ILYUSHINA AND CATHERINE BELTON

MOSCOW — Thousands of Russians who risked arrest Friday to attend the Moscow funeral of opposition leader Alexei Navalny were thwarted by a huge force of riot police, deployed to ensure that President Vladimir Putin's charismatic rival was buried with as little fanfare as possible.

But the throngs of supporters who braved the security presence sent a powerful message that many Russians still support Navalny's vision of a free, democratic Russia — and showed his pivotal role as a man who fearlessly defied Putin from prison, even as the Russian leader led his nation into war with Ukraine and



SERGEI ILNITSKY/EPA-EFE/SHUTTERSTOCK

TOP: Mourners gather outside Mother of God Soothe My Sorrows Church before Alexei Navalny's funeral. **ABOVE:** Navalny's mother, Lyudmila Navalnaya, grieves over his body at Borisovsky Cemetery. Officials erected metal barriers to keep crowds out of both sites.

a new era of repression and intolerance.

Navalny, a formidable opponent who fired up a generation of young Russians with his slogan "Russia will be free," died in prison Feb. 16 at age 47, with an official investigation declaring that his death was due to "natural causes." His widow, Yulia Navalnaya, and aides have accused Putin of his "murder," while many Western leaders have said Putin was responsible.

Navalny's supporters, blocked from entering the church by riot police and metal security barriers, applauded and chanted "Navalny! Navalny!" as his hearse arrived for the farewell service. Inside Mother of God Soothe My Sorrows Church, the service was carried out with what supporters

SEE NAVALNY ON A9

Trump team urges judge to start trial after election

Timing of Fla. case rests on other trials, potential Supreme Court ruling

BY DEVLIN BARRETT AND PERRY STEIN

FORT PIERCE, FLA. — Federal prosecutors and lawyers for Donald Trump pressed Judge Aileen M. Cannon on Friday to make a decision: Should the former president's trial for allegedly mishandling classified documents take place before or after the November election?

And if the high-profile, high-stakes trial of the GOP front-runner for president is to take place before the election, would it be too late to start the proceedings in September, so close to when voters begin casting ballots?

Cannon heard hours of arguments on those questions and other issues Friday but left the bench giving no indication of how she would decide the trial's timing — though it now seems clear it will not begin in late May as originally planned.

Prosecutors are seeking to start in July, while Trump's lawyers say the trial should wait until after the election, or August at the earliest.

Trump, the first former U.S. president charged with crimes, SEE TRUMP ON A5

Georgia: Decision expected within two weeks on Willis's removal. **A4**

Walgreens, CVS will dispense abortion pill as legal battle brews over access

Mifepristone will be sold in some states ahead of arguments at high court

BY DANIEL GILBERT

Walgreens and CVS said they will start filling prescriptions for the abortion pill mifepristone in states where it is legally allowed,

stepping into the culturally divisive battle over reproductive rights weeks before the Supreme Court is set to consider access to medication abortion.

Walgreens said it has completed the Food and Drug Administration's certification process to sell mifepristone and expects to do so within a week. "We are beginning a phased rollout in select locations to ensure quality, safety and privacy for our patients, providers and team mem-

bers," the company said.

CVS said it is "working with manufacturers and suppliers to secure the medication and are not yet dispensing it in any of our pharmacies," adding that it will begin filling prescriptions for the drug in Massachusetts and Rhode Island "in the weeks ahead and will expand to additional states, where allowed by law."

The move by two of the nation's largest pharmacy networks

promises to expand the availability of the drug, which is the subject of litigation over whether the FDA properly approved it. The Supreme Court will hear arguments in the case this month.

The availability of medications to terminate pregnancy has taken on new importance since more than a dozen states have largely banned abortion following the high court's 2022 ruling overturning *Roe v. Wade*.

"With major retail pharmacy chains newly certified to dispense medication abortion, many women will soon have the option to pick up their prescription at a local, certified pharmacy — just as they would for any other medication," President Biden said in a statement. "I encourage all pharmacies that

SEE MIFEPRISTONE ON A11

IVF: Conservative women across the U.S. defend the treatment. **A3**

IN THE NEWS

Drug decriminalization Oregon lawmakers voted to approve a rollback of the state's pioneering effort, amid a surge in fentanyl use and public backlash. **A6**

'Improv church' In Virginia, performers put on a monthly comedy show inspired by a sermon as a novel engagement tool. **B1**

THE NATION Congress blocked a move by the Education Department to expand Pell Grant access. **A2**
The CDC officially eliminated its advice that people with covid isolate for five days. **A6**

THE WORLD Doctors in Gaza tell of children with deep tissue burns, brain damage, lost limbs. And for one set, a grim initialism: WCNFSF, or "Wounded Child, No Surviving Family." **A8**

THE ECONOMY Changes at Amazon-owned health services cause alarm among patients and staffs. **A10**
Authors are finding that their books are competing for readers' attention on Amazon with knockoffs that appear to have been generated by AI. **A12**

THE REGION A measure to address juvenile crime in Maryland is sailing toward passage in the legislature. **B1**
Two weeks on, the Fairfax Connector bus strike has caused residents to turn to expensive ride-share apps for transportation. **B1**

STYLE Catherine Herridge, a former reporter for CBS and Fox News, was held in contempt and faces daily fines for refusing to reveal a source. **C1**

SPORTS It's QB day at the NFL combine, and for the Commanders, eyes are on Caleb Williams. **D1**

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