

Resident of L.A. is held in Russia

A dual national who moved to U.S., she is charged with treason over a donation to a charity for Ukraine.

BY JAWEED KALEEM, SABRA AYRES AND LAURA KING

Ksenia Karelina had left Los Angeles around the New Year on a flight to Moscow via Istanbul. She was excited to see her younger sister, parents and grandmother in Yekaterinburg, the city east of the Ural Mountains in Russia that she had left more than a decade ago to start a new life in America.

Now the 33-year-old spa aesthetician and amateur ballerina, a dual citizen of Russia and the United States, is behind bars in Russia on treason charges, with loved ones fearing for her fate and U.S. officials warning that the country has become too dangerous for any American to remain.

Word of her arrest came from the main Russian security agency, and the treason charges stemmed from an apparent donation to a New York-based Ukrainian charity that aids Ukraine's military, which for nearly two years has been fighting off Russia's full-scale invasion.

Eleonora Srebroski said she was worried Karelina, her former daughter-in-law, would not make it out of Russia, where repression under President Vladimir Putin has grown harsher since the start of the war in Ukraine.

"I don't have hope for Russian justice. It does not exist. But here, we live in a powerful country, and we can make noise and attract attention," she said, speaking near Baltimore. "I just hope she does not spend the rest of her life in jail.... I know in Russia she will be physically abused, mentally abused, and I'm very concerned."

The case, the latest detention involving an American citizen in Russia, drew a sharp warning from the White House that U.S. na-

[See Russia, A4]



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

INDIA BARR stands next to her RV at an encampment in Chatsworth. Homelessness is on the rise in the northwestern San Fernando Valley, where John Lee is running for reelection to the City Council.

Latest storm pounds Southland, renewing flood and slide worries

Newest system to hit L.A. County hasn't brought particularly high rain totals, but ground is waterlogged from a wet February

BY SUMMER LIN AND HANNAH FRY

Southern California is on watch for potential mudslides, debris flows and flooding this week as yet another storm hit a region already waterlogged by weeks of heavy rain.

As of Tuesday afternoon, downtown Los Angeles has received about 17.5 inches of rain since the water year began on Oct. 1 and about 12 inches just during February. That's almost 3 inches more than the area's average for a full year, and 8 inches more than it typically gets by this point in the water year.

"This is one of the wetter Februaries on record," said Ryan Kittell, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Oxnard. "It's been an incredibly wet month."

Despite the record rainfall, Southern California has not seen major mudslides so

[See Storm, A9]



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A PARKGOER walks along a path as rain falls on Tuesday at Lake Balboa/Anthony C. Beilenson Park in L.A. The storm is expected to ease Wednesday.

Lunar New Year traditions gain meaning after grandma's death

Family customs during Taiwan visits become clear

FRANK SHYONG

Most years, I visit my family in Taiwan for Lunar New Year. And each trip, since I was very small, I have found myself before a family altar, with a stick of smoking incense in my hands, wondering exactly what I'm supposed to do, think or say.

None of my Taiwanese relatives ever offered any instructions that I can recall. In the convoluted balancing of family needs and desires that happens on these trips back home, a 7-year-old's confusion does not carry much weight. My strategy has been to bow when everyone else does and affix an appropriately solemn expression on my face.

But something clicked during this year's trip to Tai-

[See Shyong, A12]



THE COLUMNIST'S grandmother, grandfather, aunts and uncles in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

Fears of famine rise amid chaos in Gaza Strip

A U.N. agency says it is unable to deliver aid to territories putting up stiff resistance, raising concerns of child starvation. **WORLD, A3**

How Discover deal affects you

A proposed merger with Capital One raises antitrust concerns and questions from consumer advocates. **BUSINESS, A8**

New on the local cinephile scene

Los Angeles Festival of Movies will screen new and classic films at three indie venues east of Hollywood in April. **CALENDAR, E1**

Weather

Showers. L.A. Basin: 63/48. **B6**

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Supreme Court rejects challenge to rent-control rules

Property rights claim by New York owners could have affected city laws in California.

BY DAVID G. SAVAGE

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Tuesday turned down a major property rights challenge to rent-control laws in New York City and elsewhere that give tenants a right to stay for many years in apartments at below-market rates.

A group of New York landlords had sued over the laws, contending the combination of rent regulation and long-term occupancy violated the Constitution's ban on the taking of private property for public use.

The justices had been considering taking up the appeal since late Septem-

ber. Only Justice Clarence Thomas issued a partial dissent on Tuesday to turning down the case.

The conservative justice said that the "constitutionality of regimes like New York City's is an important and pressing question," but that the landlords had failed to show evidence they'd been prevented "from evicting actual tenants for particular reasons."

A ruling in the case could have directly affected a million rental units in New York City, and could have had a significant impact in California as well.

The California Apartment Assn. had urged the justices to hear the New York case, saying "many of its members are located in the local jurisdictions subject to rent-control laws, including San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Jose, Oakland, [See Rent control, A12]

Street camps a key issue in Valley election

Councilmember John Lee, Serena Oberstein spar over how to tackle homelessness.

BY DAKOTA SMITH

Homelessness in the northwestern San Fernando Valley has jumped in recent years.

In Chatsworth, a sprawling encampment at the Metrolink station gained attention in May after a giant "Chatsworth Skid Row" sign rose at the site. Meanwhile, in that neighborhood and Granada Hills, business owners are grappling with tents and RVs outside their stores and offices.

Police crackdowns have intensified. Police have been enforcing a revised city law targeting sidewalk access in Council District 12 in the northwest Valley significantly more than they have in other neighborhoods, according to a Times analysis of data from City Controller Kenneth Mejia that looked at a two-year period starting in late 2021.

Now, the March 5 election for a Los Angeles City Council seat could decide which direction the northwest Valley takes on homelessness.

Serena Oberstein, a Northridge resident and nonprofit leader, is challenging incumbent John Lee in a campaign that promises a new approach.

She criticizes Lee for his reliance on Municipal Code 41.18 — the city's anti-camping law — which she calls a "Band-Aid solution."

"We're moving people from sidewalk to sidewalk and not solving the problem," said Oberstein, adding that she would bring to the district more resources for mental health issues and substance abuse, shelter beds and housing.

First elected in a special election in 2019 and again in 2020, Lee is seeking another four-year term in District 12, which includes West Hills, Granada Hills, Chatsworth, [See District 12, A7]



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