



T-storm 76/60 • Tomorrow: Partly sunny 75/55 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2024 • \$3

## S. Africa rocked by political killings

Violence could affect  
ruling ANC party's bid to  
retain power in election

BY KATHARINE HOURELD

NONGOMA, SOUTH AFRICA — The hit man struck just after midnight. His bullet shattered a window, punched through a 4-year-old boy and slammed into the body of his grandmother as she slept beside him, a family member recounted in an interview. The victim, Ntombenhle Mchunu, was a soft-spoken 75-year-old town councilor. That position had made her a target.

Mchunu's killing in August was the beginning of months of terror, including three other attacks on her council colleagues and their relatives, for this small town in the north of the country.

As South Africans head into national elections Wednesday, the country's politics have been rocked by an epidemic of assassinations, including 40 recorded since the start of last year. While they have largely targeted local officials, politicians and activists, the killings appear set to affect the outcome of the national vote.

The killings have fostered a climate of lawlessness and government paralysis that have fueled voter anger, and the failure of the ruling African National Congress to stem the violence has been eroding the party's popularity. National polls now show that the ANC, led by President Cyril Ramaphosa, is unlikely to gain a majority in the parliamentary elections for the first time since it came to power in 1994 after the end of apartheid, raising the prospect that the party will have to form a coalition government.

The ANC has grown so con-  
SEE SOUTH AFRICA ON A14

## After thaw in LGBTQ+ ties, slur stains pope

Francis used a pejorative  
reference to gay men,  
leading to a rare apology

BY ANTHONY FAIOLA  
AND STEFANO PITRELLI

ROME — Pope Francis on Tuesday issued a rare apology after he was accused of using a highly pejorative slur to refer to gay men in a closed-door session with bishops last week.

The pope's choice of words, reported by major Italian news outlets and confirmed to The Washington Post by a senior Vatican official, appeared to run counter to his efforts to thaw the relationship between the Catholic Church and the LGBTQ+ community. Since he first declared "Who am I to judge?" shortly after becoming pope in 2013, Francis has gone further than any pontiff in building bridges to gay Catholics.

In the meeting with Italian bishops, however, the pope was quoted as using the word "frocagGINE," which in the Roman Italian dialect roughly translates  
SEE POPE ON A10



PHOTOS BY YEHYUN KIM FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## For people of color with long covid, a 'huge disparity'

BY AKILAH JOHNSON

A mild covid infection at the start of the pandemic has thrown Jeanine Hays's immune system out of whack, she said, as her husband ticked off ailments the way drug commercials list side effects.

Chronic hives. Hair loss. Tinnitus. Severe nerve pain. Extreme fluctuations in blood pressure. Allergic reactions to synthetic fabrics and processed foods.

In every room of their house, the couple keep an air purifier and EpiPen, both things they travel with, too. And Hays always carries an extra set of clothes just in case what she's wearing becomes unbearably itchy. "I definitely still feel like a toddler in that way," she said.

"Bryan and I are learning to live with long covid," the 45-year-old said of her high school sweetheart turned husband. "Our way of life is much different."

On top of a debilitating disease, many feel  
they're being erased from records and policy  
debates. Some struggle even to get a diagnosis.



TOP: Jeanine Hays and husband Bryan Mason on a hiking trail in Napanoch, N.Y. Because her long covid has many symptoms, they take precautions like wearing N95 masks outside. ABOVE: Chimère Sweeney, a former Baltimore teacher, said of finally getting her diagnosis: "I cried. ... I was like, 'Thank you, God!'"

It has been four years since covid began burdening people with lingering symptoms often dismissed by mystified medical providers who were dubious and unwilling to help — especially when treating patients of color, according to clinicians and public health researchers.

For patients of color, it is an all-too-familiar — and maddening — story.

Health-care experts and medical studies have found that racist myths about Black people having higher pain tolerance, coupled with physicians' biases, mean Black patients are more likely to be seen as drug-seeking and described negatively in electronic medical records. That is true when it comes to routine diagnoses, and clinicians and public health researchers believe the same to be true with long covid, even as its definition remains very much a work in progress.

It's bad enough that patients  
SEE COVID ON A6

## Strike on Rafah did not violate warnings, U.S. says

BY YASMEEN ABUTALEB,  
JOHN HUDSON  
AND MISSY RYAN

The White House said Tuesday that Israel had not violated President Biden's warnings on the conduct of its military campaign in Rafah after an airstrike there over the weekend killed at least 45 Palestinians and injured hundreds more, suggesting the United States would impose no consequences for the Israeli action.

The airstrike on a makeshift tent encampment caused a fire to break out in the Tal al-Sultan neighborhood of Rafah, in southern Gaza, creating one of the most horrifying scenes of the war in the Palestinian enclave. Images of charred bodies and videos of parents burning alive as their children screamed for help ricocheted across social media, prompting renewed global outrage and growing calls for Israel to halt its offensive in Rafah.

Several Biden officials, including Vice President Harris, lamented  
SEE BIDEN ON A12

Latest strike: Gaza officials say at least 21 were killed in Rafah. A12



AMR ABDALLAH DALSH/REUTERS

The coffin of an Egyptian soldier is carried in Fayoum, Egypt, on Tuesday. The soldier was fatally shot in the Rafah border area Monday, and Egypt and Israel both said they were investigating.

## Trump trial's final pitches

PROSECUTION: PLOT  
TILTED 2016 RACE

Defense rips at Cohen  
in closing arguments

BY SHAYNA JACOBS,  
DEREK HAWKINS,  
ISAAC ARNSDORF  
AND DEVLIN BARRETT

NEW YORK — A prosecutor urged jurors in marathon closing arguments Tuesday to convict Donald Trump in a hush money scheme "that could very well be what got President Trump elected" in 2016 — suggesting that the stifled tale of sex with a porn star changed the course of American history.

By offering that the alleged crimes may have decided the winner of the 2016 presidential race, Assistant District Attorney Joshua Steinglass implicitly highlighted the potential stakes of the seven-week trial — that the jury's verdict here could alter the 2024 presidential contest, in which Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee.

Steinglass said the evidence is overwhelming that Trump knew of and directed efforts to falsify business records related to the reimbursement of a \$130,000 payment to adult-film actress Stormy Daniels.

It was a "conspiracy and a coverup" that stretched from the campaign trail to the White House, Steinglass told the jury,  
SEE TRUMP ON A7

Media frenzy: Biden's campaign stages an event outside trial. A4

What's next: Options range from mundane to unprecedented. A8

ELECTION 2024

## Trump tests limits of law with donor pleas

Ex-president increasingly  
touts promised policies  
as he solicits big money

BY JOSH DAWSEY

When Donald Trump met some of the country's top donors at a luxurious New York hotel earlier this month, he told the group that a businessman had recently offered \$1 million to his presidential effort and wanted to have lunch.

"I'm not having lunch," Trump said he responded, according to donors who attended. "You've got to make it \$25 million."

Another businessman, he said, had traditionally given \$2 million to \$3 million to Republicans. Instead, he said he told the donor that he wanted a \$25 million or \$50 million contribution or he would not be "very happy."

As he closed his pitch at the Pierre Hotel, Trump explained to the group why it was in their interest to cut large checks. If he was not put back in office, taxes  
SEE MONEY ON A5

### IN THE NEWS

Rising seas A home along North Carolina's Outer Banks became the area's sixth to fall into the sea in the past four years, and it probably won't be the last. A16

U.S. men's soccer With Copa América next and the World Cup not far behind, Coach Gregg Berhalter has a lot to focus on. D1

THE NATION President Biden braces for fallout with the first of Hunter Biden's two trials starting soon. A3  
Texas storms with powerful winds and hail knocked out power for nearly 1.4 million. A4

THE WORLD NATO's chief and some allies urged Washington to let Ukraine use donated arms in Russia. A9  
Georgia's Parliament passed a Russian-style "foreign agent" law over a presidential veto. A11

THE ECONOMY All three major self-driving vehicle companies are facing federal investigations over potential flaws linked to crashes. A15  
The replacement of aging wires would boost U.S. power grid capacity and speed the transition to clean energy. A16

THE REGION The District's lack of tracking for youths in both the justice and welfare systems can have harmful consequences, a report found. B1  
A dog at risk of being euthanized recently earned certification as a bomb-sniffing specialist in Maryland. B1

STYLE In an excerpt from his book, Michael Andor Brodeur ruminates about the sway He-Man held in the early '80s. C1

FOOD A Florida cafe that employs people with developmental and intellectual disabilities aims to do more than serve coffee.

BUSINESS NEWS.....A15  
COMICS.....C6  
OBITUARIES.....B4  
OPINION PAGES.....A17  
TELEVISION.....C3  
WORLD NEWS.....A9

CONTENT © 2024  
The Washington Post  
Year 147, No. 53866

0 170628 211001 3