

Groton Daily Independent

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Coming up

Friday, Nov. 24

No School - Thanksgiving Break

Saturday, Nov. 25

Thrift Store open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 26

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m. (No Sunday school)

St. John's Lutheran: St. John's worship, 9 a.m.; Zion worship, 11 a.m.; Sunday school, 9:45 a.m.

Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m., GHS Gym

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Monday, Nov. 27

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon.

JH GBB hosts Clark/Willow Lake (7th at 6 p.m.,



"Happiness isn't complicated. It is a humble state of gratitude for simple pleasures, tender mercies, recognized blessings, and inherent beauty."

-Richelle E. Goodrich

8th at 7 p.m.)

Pantry Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes.

Tuesday, Nov. 28

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

James Valley Telecommunications Holiday Open House, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

JH GBB at Redfield (7th at 6:15 p.m., 8th at 7:15 p.m.)

Thrift Store open 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Food Pantry open 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Senior Menu: Tuna noodle hot dish, peas, California blend, Swedish apple pie square, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Monty Cristo sandwich.

School Lunch: Scalloped potatoes with ham, corn.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Groton Daily Independent
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Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460



Demand remains high for 'heritage turkeys' grown in South Dakota

Bart Pfankuch and Mark Andersen

South Dakota News Watch

STURGIS, S.D. – During the COVID-19 pandemic, disruptions in the food production supply chain and workforce sometimes led to empty grocery shelves, pushing some consumers to turn to locally grown organic meats and produce.

That trend included heightened interest in so-called heritage turkeys, ancient breeds of the big birds that were common in the early days of the United States but which dropped from consumer consciousness as producers turned toward the plump, big-breasted turkeys that are grown en masse and will appear on millions of American dining tables this Thanksgiving.

While the pandemic spike has leveled off, a number of people in South Dakota remain highly interested in eschewing the cheaper, bigger white turkeys sold at chain grocery stores in favor of the smaller heritage birds grown and sold on a handful of Rushmore State organic farms.

"We saw a big surge during COVID, but there's still an interest and a growing interest in our turkeys," said Michelle Grosek, who runs Bear Butte Gardens organic farm near Sturgis with her husband, Rick. "Some people went back to old ways of eating, but a percentage has decided to stick with buying locally grown products."

The Groseks raise Bourbon Red heritage turkeys, which not only make great table fare but are outstanding at keeping down grasshopper populations on the farm located west of state Highway 79 just north of Sturgis.

Many visitors to the farm across the highway from Bear Butte State Park seek a closer connection to how their food is raised. And they're willing to pay more for a turkey that is locally grown in free-range conditions on farms without giant warehouses where birds are raised by the thousands and never leave until being trucked to processing plants.

"It's a good market for us and growing all the time as there is more awareness of how your standard turkey or chicken is grown in a CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation)," Michelle Grosek told News Watch.

In the run-up to Thanksgiving 2023, Grosek said she is butchering 10 of her own Bourbon Red turkeys and another 10 from another area farm. They range in finished weight from 10 to 17 pounds and are priced at \$8 a pound, she said.

Grosek said she and her husband saw a jump in interest in their Bourbon Reds following a 2020 version of this News Watch story highlighting the increased interest in heritage turkeys. She not only heard from consumers interested in buying birds to eat but from other small producers looking for breeding stock to expand their flocks of Bourbon Beds.



A fully grown Bourbon Red heritage tom turkey stands in a pasture at Bear Butte Gardens, a small organic farm operation located not far from Bear Butte State Park just east of Sturgis, S.D. (Photo: Courtesy Rick Grosek)

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“Some of the old timers, the big-scale producers, have bowed out. The red flag is going up once again for [heritage] turkeys like in the '90s. We need more people breeding these birds.”

Jeannette Beranger, program manager
for the Livestock Conservancy of Pittsboro, N.C.

"It was like a nice new community developed around that article, and I did not foresee that," she said.

Known collectively as "heritage turkeys," many of the ancient breeds almost went extinct in the late 1990s. But those colorful, playful and spritely bird breeds are on the rebound as a small group of niche farmers in South Dakota and beyond are once again breeding, raising and selling heritage turkeys as part of a growing farm-to-table agricultural movement.

The story of how heritage turkey breeds almost disappeared, how a genetically modified bird that cannot reproduce on its own became the nation's preferred table fare, and how a few farmers are fostering the re-emergence of the ancient breeds is a tale that sheds light on how modern agriculture

has used science and selective breeding to increase production and profits. Yet it is also a story about how some farmers are taking on the task of preserving the ancient breeds to meet an increasing demand by some consumers to know more about what they eat and how it is raised.

Breeding stock of heritage turkeys such as Auburn, Buff, Black, Bourbon Red, Narragansett, Royal Palm, Slate, Standard Bronze and Midget White totaled just 1,335 in 1997, according to a census taken by The Livestock Conservancy of Pittsboro, North Carolina.

Conservancy program manager Jeannette Beranger said in fall 2020 that the alarming decrease in birds sparked efforts to preserve heritage breed turkeys, whose total had climbed to 14,000 by 2016, the year the last census was taken. Specific breeds like Black turkeys remain rare; Chocolate turkeys have vanished.

The concern now is whether a new generation of farmers dedicated to preserving heritage breeds will step forward to replace those now retiring.

"Some of the old timers, the big-scale producers, have bowed out. The red flag is going up once again for (heritage) turkeys like in the '90s," Beranger said. "We need more people breeding these birds."

Only a handful of South Dakota producers raise heritage breed turkeys to sell. They do it out of a desire for preservation, to tap into a growing base of highly selective consumers, a preference for sustainable agriculture or because the heritage breeds are known for higher fat content and greater juiciness than the mass-produced birds.

The vast majority of the more than 200 million turkeys that Americans consume annually descend from a single breed — the Broad-Breasted White, a far different creature from turkeys of old.

Modern Broad Breasted White turkeys reach market weight in 14 to 18 weeks, compared with 28 weeks for other breeds. In heritage breeds, the extra weeks allow for more skeletal development and greater fat production, affecting juiciness and flavor.

Raised in large indoor pens, today's commercial turkeys cannot defend themselves from predators, rear their young or reproduce without artificial insemination. They are too top-heavy to mate without assistance, with up to 70 percent of the bird's weight concentrated in the oversized breast. They have weaker immune systems.

South Dakota is a significant producer of Broad Breasted Whites, with about 5 million turkeys raised annually almost exclusively in concentrated animal feeding operations runs by Hutterite colonies in East River. The Hutterite-owned Dakota Provisions turkey plant in Huron processes about 200 million pounds of turkeys a year and makes up a significant portion of the state's \$300 million annual poultry industry.

— This article was produced by South Dakota News Watch, a non-profit journalism organization located online at sdnewswatch.org.

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ALL OVER ROOFING

Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen and Talent Contest on Sunday, November 26th at 4:00pm. The Groton Chamber voted to gift Snow Queen \$100 in Chamber Bucks for the winner of the Mystery Frosty competition.



2023 Frosty Clues

I....

24.) am embarrassed to admit that I am chronically late

Zoellner has been knitting mittens for 18 years

by Dorene Nelson

Sharon Zoellner was the guest speaker at Groton Area Elementary school on Monday, November 20. She visited with the students in kindergarten through second grade, ending her presentation with colorful gifts of hand knitted mittens for every child.

"I've been doing this for 18 years now," Zoellner smiled. "I can't just sit around and watch television all of the time, so I like to keep busy and knitting is a good way to do that!"

"I enjoy reading, baking, doing word puzzles, and knitting," she listed. "I make more than just mittens, however. I also make baby booties, afghans, sweaters, Christmas stockings, and caps.

Near the end of her presentation, Zoellner had a little boy show one of the slippers she had made. "These are for putting in your coat pocket and, after you get inside and take off your boots, you can slip these on to keep your feet warm as you walk around the classroom or your home."

"I have mittens for all of these little kids and like to explain what I do and how it is done," she added. "These are called knitting needles and are what I use to do the knitting."

When Zoellner asked the students what she should do with the extra mittens that she has, several quickly volunteered suggestions. "You could make gifts for Christmas, especially for

those kids who don't have any mittens!"

"I love that idea," she exclaimed, "and I have knitted hats for children who have cancer and lose their hair."

"Carter, my second grade grandson here in Groton, and his family probably have thirty Christmas stockings altogether," Zoellner stated. "Some of the Christmas stockings I make are small and can be used for tree ornaments."

"It takes me about six hours to knit one pair of mittens," she explained. "I have 138 pairs here with me today. Altogether I've made 1350 pairs for Groton students and also gave 75 pairs to students in Britton, SD."

"I have a suggestion for you when the weather is really cold," added Mrs. Anne Zoellner, Sharon's daughter-in-law. "Put on a pair of stretchy gloves first, then put these knitted mittens on over the top. This keeps your hands really nice and warm!"

Following the talk with the students in one large group, Sharon Zoellner visited the kindergarten through second grade classrooms and handed out a pair of mittens to each



Sharon Zoellner handing out mittens. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



Sharon, grandson Carter, and daughter-in-law Anne. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

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student. Inside each pair was an additional surprise: a candy cane to take home.

The teachers for kindergarten are Ann Gibbs and Lindsey DeHoet; for first grade, Julie Milbrandt and Caitlyn Fischbach; and for second grade, Emily Dinger and Anne Zoellner.

Sharon Zoellner and her husband Alan live in Groton. Their two sons, Troy and Darin, do the farming. Both of her sons are also wrestling coaches for the Groton Area School system. Altogether the Zoellners have eight grandchildren.



Sharon Zoellner shows off a Christmas stocking. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



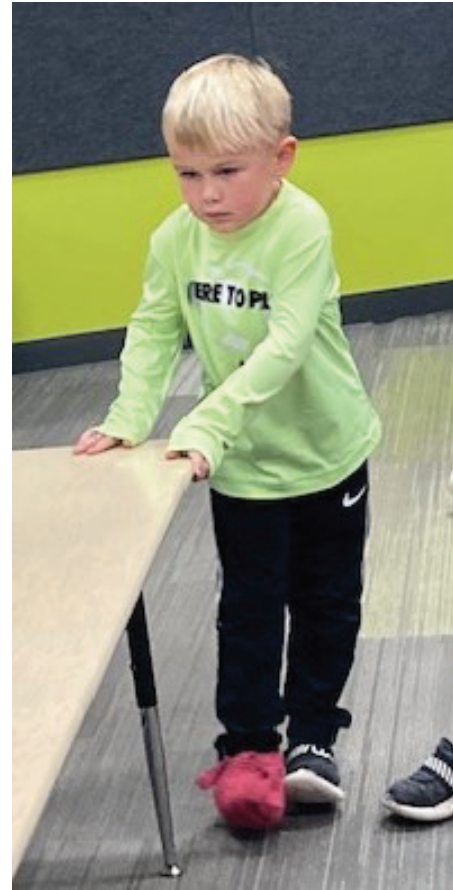
Three tubs of mittens. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)

A large group listened to Sharon Zoellner. (Photo by Dorene Nelson)



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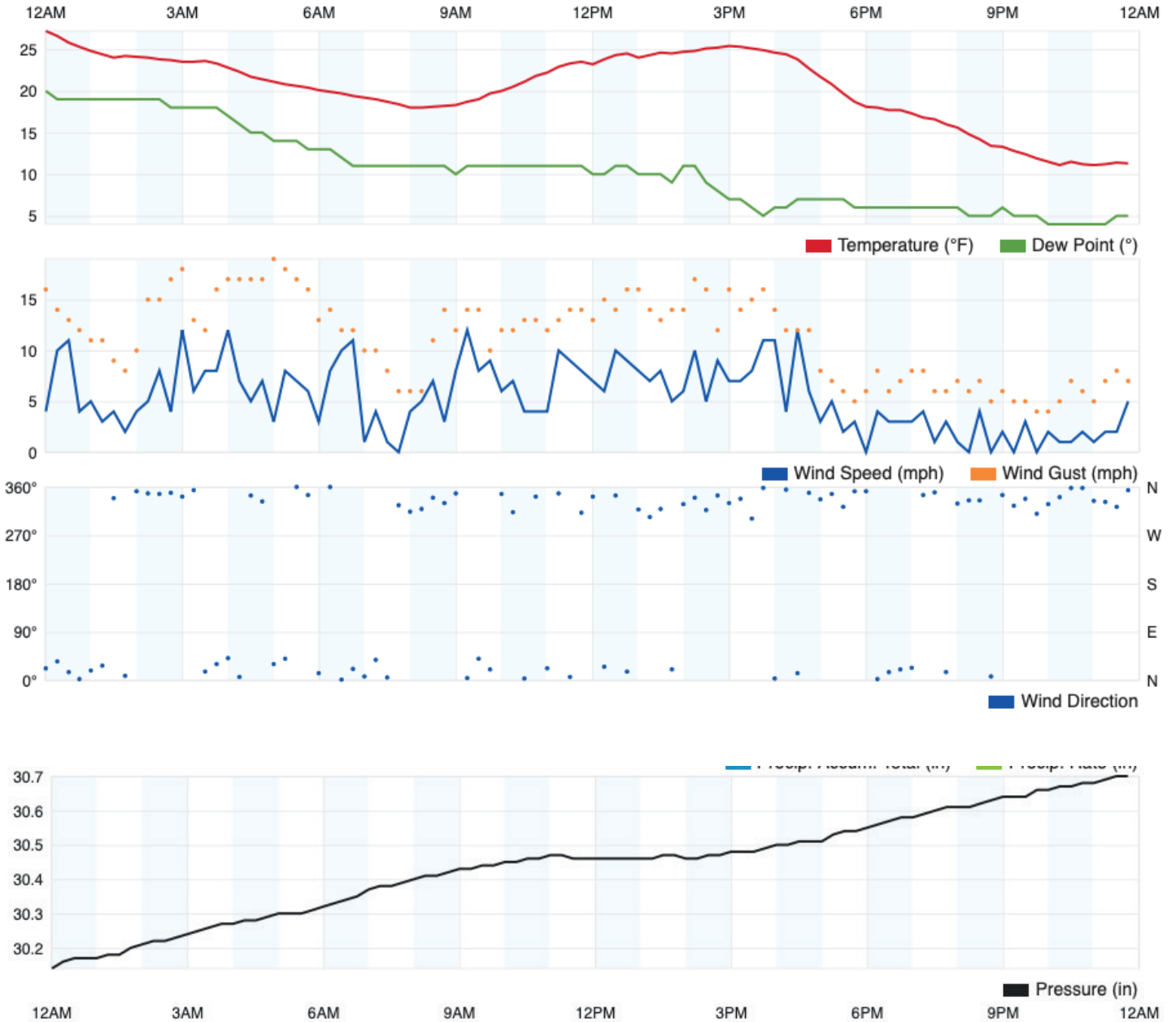
Sharon Zoellner also knitts hats and slippers as students try them on. (Photo

by Dorene Nelson)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Fri Nov 24	Sat Nov 25	Sun Nov 26	Mon Nov 27	Tue Nov 28	Wed Nov 29	Thu Nov 30
26°F	31°F	30°F	34°F	42°F	43°F	39°F
17°F	21°F	9°F	18°F	22°F	22°F	19°F
NNE	SSW	NW	WSW	SSW	WNW	SSE
5 MPH	12 MPH	20 MPH	10 MPH	14 MPH	14 MPH	14 MPH




Continued Chilly - Light Snow Potential

+ Milder For Next Week

November 24, 2023
2:33 AM

Today	Tonight	Saturday	Sunday
25-30°	12-15° Very Light Snow Central South Dakota (Trace Accumulations)	27-35°	27-33° Snow Showers Northwest Winds 30-45 mph



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

We will continue to see chilly conditions through the weekend. A weak system out west will bring some very light snow to the southern half of South Dakota tonight/Saturday morning, with another system bringing snow showers and strong winds to the region Sunday.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 27 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 11 °F at 10:17 PM

Wind: 19 mph at 5:00 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 9 hours, 14 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 1932

Record Low: -17 in 1996

Average High: 38

Average Low: 16

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.62

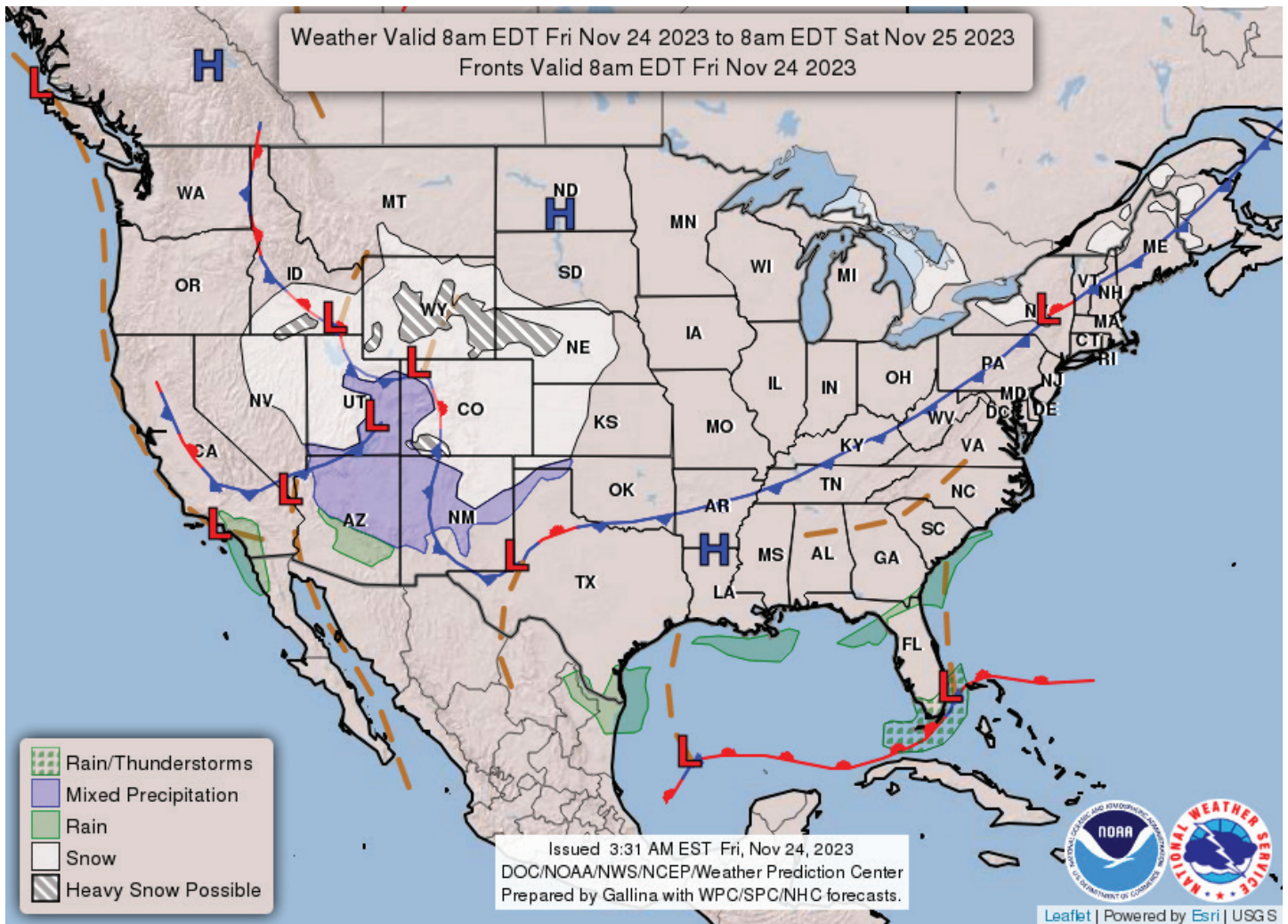
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.19

Average Precip to date: 21.09

Precip Year to Date: 23.17

Sunset Tonight: 4:56:30 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42:54 AM



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Today in Weather History

November 24, 1993: A major slow-moving storm system traveled across the upper Midwest during the Thanksgiving holiday, dumping heavy snow across most of South Dakota and Minnesota from November 24 through the 27th. The highest snowfall amounts of two to three feet occurred in northeast South Dakota. Over a foot of snow accumulated in west central Minnesota, and needless to say, travel became tough across the entire area. Storm total snowfall amounts included 31.8 inches at Westport, 29.5 inches at Leola, 28 inches at Britton, 25.3 inches at Aberdeen, 24.3 inches at Mellette, 24.0 inches at McLaughlin, and 22.0 inches near Victor. The snowfall of 25.3 inches at Aberdeen was a single storm record (that still stands today), and it made November 1993 one of the snowiest months on record in Aberdeen with a total of 30.1 inches of snowfall. Only three months have recorded more snow: November 1898, February 1915, and November 2000. The storm closed numerous schools and offices on November 24th across the area, resulting in an early start to the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Some freezing rain and freezing drizzle preceded the snowstorm in southeast South Dakota from late on the 23rd to the 24th, causing at least 60 vehicle accidents. The heavy snow also clogged roads, causing vehicles to become stuck and resulting in numerous accidents. As a consequence of the heavy snow, low wind chills, and low visibilities, a 23-year old man was stranded in his pickup truck in a snow bank north of Aberdeen for 18 hours on the 23rd and 24th. The weight of snow collapsed many structures in northeast South Dakota from the 25th to the 26th. The roof of a metal barn collapsed two miles northwest of Aberdeen, killing one dairy cow in the barn. In Castlewood, a 100-foot by 40-foot metal pole shed fell in, causing damage to a grain truck inside. A machine shed also caved in on a farm east of Bowdle. During the afternoon of the 26th, part of the roof and wall of the Roscoe Senior Center collapsed, causing a near-total loss to the building. Strong northwest winds followed the snowstorm in western and central South Dakota, causing considerable blowing and drifting snow and wind chills as low as 50 degrees below zero. In North Dakota, over two feet of snow fell over a large part of central and southeastern portions of the state. Most of North Dakota had over a foot of snow from this storm. The greatest snowfall amount was reported at Oakes, in Dickey County where 31 inches fell. At the National Weather Service office in Bismarck, 28.3 inches of snow were measured during the 108-hour snow event. This amount set a new single storm record for snow in Bismarck. The snow began the evening on the 22nd and did not end until the morning of the 27th. Except for about six hours during the day on the 26th, the snow was continuous through this period. Fortunately, the wind was only 10 to 25 mph during this storm, so it was well below blizzard conditions and blowing and drifting of snow was not a problem.

1812 - Southwesterly winds of hurricane force sank ships and unroofed buildings at Philadelphia and New York City. (David Ludlum)

1863: The "battle above the clouds" was fought on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga. Pre-frontal clouds obscured the upper battlefield aiding a Union victory.

1950 - The temperature at Chicago, IL, dipped to 2 below zero to equal their record for the month established on the 29th in 1872. On the first of the month that year Chicago established a record high for November with a reading of 81 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1982: Hurricane Iwa, a Category 1 hurricane, impacted the Hawaii Islands of Ni'ihau, Kaua'i, and O'ahu with gusts exceeding 100 mph and a storm surge of 30 feet. The first significant hurricane to hit the Hawaiian Islands since statehood in 1959, Iwa severely damaged or destroyed 2,345 buildings, including 1,927 houses, leaving 500 people homeless. Damage throughout the state totaled \$312 (\$765 million 2015 USD). One person was killed from the high seas, and three deaths were indirectly related to the hurricane's aftermath.

1988 - Low pressure brought heavy snow and high winds to the Northern and Central Rockies. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 40 inches at Wolf Creek Pass, with 27 inches falling in 24 hours. Telluride CO received 32 inches of snow, and winds atop Mines Peak gusted to 95 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

IT'S FLAWED! DISCARD IT!

A great sculptor was commissioned to create a statue of Napoleon. The marble was ordered from a quarry in Greece known for its quality materials. As soon as it arrived in the studio of the famous sculptor, Canova, he examined it carefully. To his dismay he noticed that it was not perfect.

In disgust, he shouted, "Discard it! It has a flaw in it. I will not lay my chisel upon it."

How fortunate we are that God's attitude toward and acceptance of sinners is the exact opposite. Paul boldly declares that God saved us "by His grace" - a word that means strong kindness toward someone! Imagine, if you can, how important God's grace is for us.

God is perfection, and only what is perfect is good enough for Him. Our very nature condemns us and will not allow us to grow into anything near perfection. If we are ever to get near to God, then it must be on His terms.

God is also love. This love that we do not deserve or can ever understand is what makes grace necessary. There is nothing we could ever do that would enable us to remove the flaws in our lives. We need Someone who is above us and beyond us, yet who loves us, Who will reach out to us and say, "In spite of your flaws, I love you and will forgive you and transform you into a work of beauty by My grace if you have faith in, and will accept My Son as your Savior."

Despite their flaws and imperfections, their shortcomings and sins, Jesus called men to become His disciples who were like us: ordinary sinners saved by grace.

Prayer: Lord, it's more than breaking Your laws that requires Your grace, but breaking Your heart. Forgive us, transform us and enable us to live worthy of Your love. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-9



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/05/2023 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Fall Dinner, 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
- 11/11/2023 Groton American Legion Annual Turkey Party 6:30 pm.
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 11/26/2023 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
- 12/02/2023 Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close

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The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.21.23

17 22 25 30 38 24

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$308,000,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 17 Mins 37
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.22.23

17 19 37 42 45 7

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,400,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 32
DRAW: Mins 36 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.23.23

7 25 33 43 44 9

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 14 Hrs 47 Mins 37
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.22.23

3 17 28 29 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$65,000

NEXT 1 Days 14 Hrs 47
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.22.23

20 21 30 55 56 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 16
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.22.23

20 24 33 39 42 21

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$340,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 15 Hrs 16
DRAW: Mins 37 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the Associated Press

Israel and Hamas begin cease-fire, setting stage for release of some hostages and more aid to Gaza

By WAFAA SHURAF, BASSEM MROUE and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A four-day cease-fire between Israel and Hamas began Friday, allowing sorely needed aid to start flowing into Gaza and setting the stage for the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

There were no reports of fighting in the hours after the truce began. The deal offered some relief for Gaza's 2.3 million people, who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment and dwindling supplies of basic necessities, as well as for families in Israel worried about loved ones taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, which triggered the war.

The first exchange Friday afternoon would involve swapping 39 Palestinian prisoners — 24 women, including some convicted of attempted murder for attacks on Israeli forces, and 15 teenagers jailed for offenses like throwing stones — for 13 Israeli hostages, Palestinian authorities said.

The truce raised hopes of eventually winding down the conflict, which has flattened vast swaths of Gaza, fueled a surge of violence in the occupied West Bank and stirred fears of a wider conflagration across the Middle East. Israel, however, has said it is determined to resume its massive offensive once the cease-fire ends.

On Friday, it brought quiet after weeks in which Gaza saw heavy bombardment and artillery fire daily as well as street fighting as ground troops advanced through neighborhoods in the north. The last report of air raid sirens in Israeli towns near the territory came shortly after the truce took effect.

Not long after, four tankers with fuel and four with cooking gas entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt, Israel said.

Israel has agreed to allow the delivery of 130,000 liters (34,340 gallons) of fuel per day during the truce — still only a small portion of Gaza's estimated daily needs of more than 1 million liters.

For most of the past seven weeks of war, Israel had barred the entry of fuel to Gaza, claiming it could be used by Hamas for military purposes — though it has occasionally allowed small amounts in.

U.N. aid agencies pushed back against the claim, saying fuel deliveries were closely supervised and urgently needed to avert a humanitarian catastrophe since fuel is required to run generators that power water treatment facilities, hospitals and other critical infrastructure.

The Israeli military dropped leaflets over southern Gaza, warning hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians who sought refuge there not to return to their homes in the territory's north, the focus of Israel's ground offensive.

Even though Israel warned that it would block such attempts, hundreds of Palestinians could be seen walking north Friday.

Two were shot and killed by Israeli troops and another 11 were wounded. An Associated Press journalist saw the two bodies and the wounded as they arrived at a hospital.

Sofian Abu Amer, who had fled Gaza City, said he decided to risk heading north to check on his home. "We don't have enough clothes, food and drinks," he said. "The situation is disastrous. It's better for a person to die."

During the cease-fire, Gaza's ruling Hamas group pledged to free at least 50 of the about 240 hostages it and other militants took on Oct. 7. Hamas said Israel would free 150 Palestinian prisoners.

Both sides agreed to release women and children first, in stages starting Friday. Israel said the deal calls for the truce to be extended an extra day for every additional 10 hostages freed.

Early in the day, ambulances were seen arriving at the Hatzerim air base in southern Israel, preparing for the release. Those freed will then be taken to hospitals for assessment and treatment, Israeli officials said.

The first hostages freed will be Israeli citizens, including some who have a second nationality, according

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to a Hamas official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the details with the media.

The official would not comment on media reports that Hamas had also agreed to release non-Israelis, including 23 Thai nationals. Thailand's foreign minister told reporters in Bangkok he had not been able to confirm the reports.

Israel's Justice Ministry published a list of 300 prisoners eligible for release, mainly teenagers detained over the past year for rock-throwing and other minor offenses. Three Palestinian prisoners are expected to be released for every hostage freed.

The hope is that "momentum" from the deal will lead to an "end to this violence," said Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry of Qatar, which served as a mediator along with the United States and Egypt.

But hours before it came into effect, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant was quoted telling troops that their respite would be short and that the war would resume with intensity for at least two more months.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also vowed to continue the war to destroy Hamas' military capabilities, end its 16-year rule in Gaza and return all the hostages.

Israel's northern border with Lebanon was also quiet on Friday, a day after the militant Hezbollah group, an ally of Hamas, carried out the highest number of attacks in one day since fighting there began Oct. 8.

Hezbollah is not a party to the cease-fire agreement, but was widely expected to halt its attacks.

The war erupted when several thousand Hamas militants stormed into southern Israel, killing at least 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking scores of hostages, including babies, women and older adults, as well as soldiers.

The soldiers will only be released in exchange for all Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, according to the Islamic Jihad militant group, which is reportedly holding about 40 hostages.

It is not clear how many of the hostages are currently serving in the military or whether the militants also consider reserve soldiers to be "military hostages."

According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, an advocacy group, Israel is currently holding 7,200 Palestinians on security charges or convictions, including about 2,000 arrested since the start of the war.

The Israeli offensive has killed more than 13,300 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which resumed its detailed count of casualties in Gaza after stopping for weeks because of the health system's collapse in the north.

The ministry says some 6,000 people have been reported missing, feared buried under rubble.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its death tolls. Women and minors have consistently made up around two-thirds of the dead, though the new number was not broken down. The figure does not include updated numbers from hospitals in the north.

Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas fighters, without presenting evidence for its count.

Live updates | Israel-Hamas truce begins with a cease-fire ahead of hostage and prisoner releases

By The Associated Press undefined

A four-day cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war began Friday morning in Gaza as part of an agreement that Qatar helped broker. The deal also includes the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, which was to begin later Friday.

With the deal comes increased shipments of fuel and supplies into Gaza — though still only enough to dent the needs of the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment, according to aid groups. Israel has agreed to allow the delivery of 130,000 liters (34,300 gallons) of fuel a day into besieged Gaza for humanitarian needs for the duration of the truce.

More than 13,300 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza after a dayslong pause in its casualty report, which it attributed to the health system's collapse in northern Gaza making it impossible to provide a detailed count.

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will press ahead with the war after the cease-fire expires. Some 1,200 people have been killed in Israel, mostly during the initial incursion by Hamas.

Currently:

- A four-day truce begins, setting the stage for the release of dozens of hostages.
- Hezbollah fires rockets at north Israel after an airstrike kills 5 of the group's senior fighters.
- Thousands led by Cuba's president march in solidarity with Palestinians.
- Find more of AP's coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/israel-hamas-war>.

Here's what's happening in the war:

ISRAEL'S FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS IT WILL RESUME WAR AFTER TRUCE ENDS

JERUSALEM -- Israel's foreign minister said Friday that Israel will resume the war against Hamas after a temporary cease-fire ends.

A truce in the Israel-Hamas war began Friday, setting the stage for the release of 50 hostages held by militants in Gaza in exchange for 150 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. The releases are to take place in stages over four days.

The truce could be extended by a day for each additional release of 10 more hostages — an arrangement that could translate into a longer cease-fire. In all, militants from Hamas and other groups kidnapped about 240 people in their Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Israeli leaders have pledged that the war will resume.

"Israel will continue its war on Hamas and we will not stop until we achieve our two main goals, overthrowing the rule of Hamas and returning all the abductees back to us, safe and sound," Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said Friday as he toured Israel's ravaged border areas with his counterparts from Portugal and Slovenia.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant have made similar pledges.

However, the government is under intense public pressure to bring all hostages home, which might make a resumption of the war exceedingly difficult.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES RELEASE LIST OF 39 PRISONERS EXPECTED TO BE FREED FRIDAY

JERUSALEM — Palestinian authorities have released a list of 39 Palestinian prisoners expected to be released on Friday, including 24 women and 15 teenage boys, in exchange for 13 Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza.

The swap is part of a four-day truce in the Israel-Hamas war. The truce began Friday after seven weeks of war.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club, an advocacy group, said the 39 detainees from the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem will be delivered to the International Committee of the Red Cross at Israel's Ofer Prison near the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Their release is to take place after 4 p.m. local time (1400 GMT), when Hamas is due to return the 13 Israeli hostages to Israel.

Most of the 15 Palestinian teenagers to be released Friday were arrested over incitement and stone-throwing, as well as the broadly defined charge of "supporting terrorism."

The 24 women include some convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to yearslong prison terms for attacks against Israeli security forces.

In all, 50 hostages and 150 Palestinian prisoners are to be freed during the four-day truce.

Israel currently holds 7,200 Palestinians charged with or convicted of security offenses.

The Prisoners' Club said about 2,000 Palestinians were arrested since the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel that triggered the war.

FRANCE CALLS FOR RELEASE OF ALL HOSTAGES, INCLUDING 8 FRENCH CITIZENS, AND A LASTING TRUCE

BEIJING — French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna called Friday for the release of all hostages held in Gaza, including eight French citizens, and a lasting truce between Israel and Hamas.

"It is essential that international law is applied there (in Gaza) as elsewhere," Colonna said during a trip

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to Beijing. "All states have the right to defend themselves, but we must cooperate so that terrorism is contained."

She called for a durable truce so that "the wounded can be treated, and humanitarian aid can arrive and ease the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza."

The eight French hostages in Gaza include three children. The French president, foreign minister and defense minister have traveled to the region in recent weeks to push for their release and a long-term peace.

Forty French citizens were killed in the Hamas attacks in Israel on Oct. 7, and two French citizens have been killed in attacks on Gaza, according to the Foreign Ministry. France has sent flights and warships to bring humanitarian aid for Gaza.

AMBULANCES ARRIVE AT ISRAELI MILITARY BASE AHEAD OF HOSTAGE RELEASE

HATZERIM MILITARY BASE, Israel — Ambulances arrived at Hatzetim military air base in southern Israel on Friday, hours before hostages were expected to arrive after being released from Hamas captivity in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials said that after arriving at the air base escorted by Israeli soldiers, the released hostages will be flown or driven to five different hospitals across the country for medical treatment, as needed.

Gaza's ruling Hamas group has pledged to free at least 50 of the about 240 hostages it and other militants took in their deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel. In turn, Israel is to free three Palestinian prisoners for each released hostage. The releases are to take place in stages over the next four days.

ISRAELI FORCES KILL A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY IN THE WEST BANK

JERUSALEM — Israeli forces shot and killed a 12-year-old Palestinian boy in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian health officials said Friday, as violence surges in the territory under the shadow of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The boy was killed Thursday in the village of Beita near the flashpoint city of Nablus in the northern West Bank, the officials said.

The Israeli military said Palestinians threw stones when soldiers entered the village and that troops responded with live fire. The military said it was looking into the circumstances of the boy's death.

Since the Israel-Hamas war began seven weeks ago, the West Bank has seen one of the deadliest periods in at least two decades. Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed 229 Palestinians, including 52 children and minors under the age of 18, in arrest raids and violent confrontations, according to U.N. figures.

The war was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel in which about 1,200 people were killed.

ISRAELI TROOPS FIRE AT PALESTINIANS ATTEMPTING TO RETURN TO NORTHERN GAZA, KILLING TWO

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli troops fatally shot two Palestinians and wounded 11 others as they headed toward the main combat zone in northern Gaza despite warnings by the Israeli army to stay put.

An Associated Press journalist saw the two bodies and the wounded as they arrived at a hospital in the town of Deir al-Balah in the southern half of Gaza. The injured had been shot in the legs.

Friday's shooting came hours after the Israeli military warned hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians who sought refuge in southern Gaza not to attempt to return to their homes in the northern half of the territory, the focus of Israel's ground offensive.

The military had dropped leaflets on southern Gaza saying that returning to northern Gaza is prohibited and dangerous.

Since a four-day truce went into effect Friday morning, hundreds of Palestinians were seen trying to head to northern Gaza.

Witnesses said Israeli troops are opening fire on people trying to head north.

Sofian Abu Amer, who had fled Gaza City, said he decided to risk heading north to check on his home.

"We don't have enough clothes, food and drinks," he said. "The situation is disastrous. It's better for a person to die."

Since the early days of the war triggered by the Hamas attack on southern Israel seven weeks ago, hundreds of thousands of people have left their homes in the north at the orders of the Israeli army.

'EVERYONE IN RETURN FOR EVERYONE,' PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADER SAYS

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BEIRUT — The leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group said Friday that Israeli soldiers among the 240 hostages held by militant groups in Gaza will only be released in exchange for all the Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

Islamic Jihad is reportedly holding about 40 of the hostages who were captured by Hamas and other militant groups during their Oct. 7 attack on southern Israel. Over the next four days, 50 hostages are to be released in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners, with both sides releasing women and children first.

In a televised speech on the first day of what is meant to be a four-day truce in the Israel-Hamas war, Islamic Jihad leader Ziad Nakhleh said that "the enemy's military prisoners will not be released without the freedom of our prisoners and this is linked to the end of the aggression." He said that Israel would be forced to "eventually reach a deal of everyone in return for everyone."

It was not immediately clear how many of the hostages held in Gaza are currently serving in the military and whether the militants also consider reserve soldiers to be military hostages.

Close to 7,000 Palestinians are currently imprisoned by Israel on security charges, including about 1,800 arrested since the start of the war.

MUCH-NEEDED FUEL AND COOKING GAS TANKERS ENTER GAZA

JERUSALEM — Israel announced that four tankers with fuel and four tankers with cooking gas entered the Gaza Strip on Friday, the first day of what is meant to be a four-day cease-fire.

Israel has agreed to allow the delivery of 130,000 liters (34,300 gallons) of fuel a day into besieged Gaza for humanitarian needs for the duration of the truce. This would be roughly twice the amount permitted previously, but still only a small portion of Gaza's daily needs, estimated at more than 1 million liters (264,000 gallons).

For most of the past seven weeks of war, Israel had barred the entry of any fuel to Gaza, claiming it could be used by Hamas for military purposes. United Nations aid agencies pushed back against such claims, saying fuel deliveries were closely supervised and urgently needed to avert a humanitarian catastrophe.

It was not immediately clear if Friday's deliveries meant the new daily target set by the truce deal had been reached. The announcement was made by COGAT, a body in Israel's defense ministry responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs.

THAI FOREIGN MINISTER SAYS HE CANNOT CONFIRM REPORTS OF THAI HOSTAGES BEING RELEASED

BANGKOK — Thailand's foreign minister said Friday morning that he has not yet been able to confirm media reports that 23 Thai workers held hostage in Gaza were set to be released. But, the minister said, his Iranian counterpart, who is serving as an intermediary with Hamas, told him there will be "good news soon."

Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara said his ministry has been preparing to receive the hostages if and when they are released.

Qatari officials, who have been the main intermediaries in hostage release talks, will have a meeting about the matter, Parnpree said, and by Friday afternoon Thai officials expect to know more developments and hope it will be good news.

The missing workers were among about 30,000 Thais employed mostly in Israel's agricultural sector. According to the Thai foreign ministry, 39 were killed in the Oct. 7 attacks, and 36 abducted. More than 8,600 workers have been voluntarily repatriated home since the attacks.

ISRAELI MILITARY SAYS IT HAS DESTROYED TUNNELS UNDER SHIFA HOSPITAL

JERUSALEM — The Israeli military said Friday it has destroyed stretches of tunnels and a number of tunnel shafts in the area of Shifa Hospital, Gaza's largest.

On Wednesday, Israel showed a tunnel and rooms that military officials said were a major Hamas hideout beneath Shifa. Hamas and hospital staff deny Israeli allegations that Shifa was used as a militant command center.

On Thursday, Israeli military spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said Israel mapped out Shifa Hospital and plans to destroy all "terror infrastructure" it has found.

Separately, the military said it continued to strike targets throughout the night leading up to a four-day

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truce that began Friday morning. It said it "completed its operational preparations according to the combat lines of the pause."

FOUR-DAY TRUCE BEGINS IN GAZA

A temporary truce in the Israel-Hamas war took effect early Friday, setting the stage for the exchange of dozens of hostages held by militants in Gaza for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

The halt in fighting began at 7 a.m. local time (0500 GMT) and is to last at least four days. During the truce, Gaza's ruling Hamas group pledged to free at least 50 of the about 240 hostages it and other militants took in their deadly Oct. 7 attack on Israel. In turn, Israel is to free three Palestinian prisoners for each released hostage. The releases are to take place in stages over the next four days.

The truce deal was reached in weeks of intense indirect negotiations, with Qatar, the United States and Egypt serving as mediators. If it holds, it would mark the first significant break in fighting since Israel declared war on Hamas seven weeks ago.

About 1,200 people were killed by Hamas attackers in Israel on Oct. 7. Israel responded with a massive air and ground offensive that has devastated large swaths of Gaza and killed at least 13,300 Palestinians.

A rapidly melting Antarctica gets the attention of UN chief ahead of COP28 climate talks

By ISABELLA O'MALLEY and ALEXANDRE PLAZA Associated Press

KING GEORGE ISLAND, Antarctica (AP) — On the cusp of the COP28 climate talks, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited frozen but rapidly melting Antarctica and said Thursday that intense action must be taken at the conference where countries will address their commitments to lowering emissions of planet-warming gases.

"We are witnessing an acceleration that is absolutely devastating," Guterres said about the rate of ice melt in Antarctica, which is considered to be a "sleeping giant."

"The Antarctic is waking up, and the world must wake up," he added.

Guterres is on a three-day official visit to Antarctica. Chilean President Gabriel Boric joined him for an official visit to Chile's Eduardo Frei Air Force Base on King George Island.

Guterres also was scheduled to visit the Collins and Nelson glaciers by boat.

He described the U.N. climate change conference that begins in Dubai next week as an opportunity for nations to "decide the phase-out of fossil fuels in an adequate time frame" to prevent the world from warming 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial temperatures.

Guterres said the COP28 conference also gives nations the chance to commit to more renewable energy projects and to improve energy efficiency of existing grids and technologies.

The U.N. chief also said he thinks that Sultan al-Jaber, the president of the upcoming climate talks and head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, has a "bigger responsibility" to encourage the fossil fuel industry to make more clean energy investments because of his ties to the sector.

"He needs to be able to explain to all those that are responsible in the fossil fuel industry, and especially to the oil and gas industry that is making obscene profits all over the world, that this is the moment to use those profits instead of doubling down on fossil fuels," Guterres said.

Warming air and ocean temperatures are causing Antarctic ice to melt. The frozen continent plays a significant role in regulating Earth's climate because it reflects sunlight away and drives major ocean currents.

For years, scientists and environmentalists have kept an eye on the West Antarctic Ice Sheet as an important indicator of global warming. A study published in Nature Climate Change last month said warming has increased to the point that the ice sheet will now experience "unavoidable" melting regardless of how much the world reduces emissions of planet-warming gases like carbon dioxide.

The study's lead author, Kaitlin Naughten, estimated that melting ice in Antarctica's most at-risk areas could raise global sea levels by about 1.8 meters (5.9 feet) over the next few centuries.

Another study published in Science Advances, also last month, reported that nearly 50 Antarctic ice shelves have shrunk by at least 30% since 1997 and 28 of those have lost more than half their ice in that

short period of time.

South African Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius granted parole 10 years after killing his girlfriend

By GERALD IMRAY and MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — Double-amputee Olympic runner Oscar Pistorius was granted parole Friday, 10 years after shooting his girlfriend through a toilet door at his home in South Africa in a killing that jolted the world.

Department of Corrections spokesperson Singabakho Nxumalo said Pistorius would be released from prison on Jan. 5. His parole will come with conditions, including that he not leave the area of Pretoria where he is set to live without permission from authorities. Pistorius will also attend a program to deal with his anger issues, Nxumalo said, and will have to perform community service.

Pistorius' parole conditions will be in place for five years, the Department of Corrections said.

"Parole does not mean the end of the sentence. It is still part of the sentence. It only means the inmate will complete the sentence outside a correctional facility," Nxumalo said.

Pistorius, who turned 37 this week, has been in jail since late 2014 for the Valentine's Day 2013 killing of model Reeva Steenkamp, although he was released for a period of house arrest in 2015 while one of the numerous appeals in his case was heard. He was ultimately convicted of murder and sentenced to 13 years and five months in prison.

Serious offenders in South Africa must serve at least half of their sentence to be eligible for parole, which Pistorius has done.

Pistorius was at the height of his fame and one of the world's most admired athletes when he killed Steenkamp. He shot her multiple times in the bathroom of his Pretoria villa in the predawn hours with his licensed 9mm pistol.

Friday's parole hearing was Pistorius' second in the space of eight months. He was wrongly ruled ineligible for early release at a first hearing in March. That was due to an error made by an appeals court over when the sentence officially started.

Pistorius was initially convicted of culpable homicide — a charge comparable to manslaughter — for killing Steenkamp. That conviction was overturned and he was convicted of murder after an appeal by prosecutors. They also appealed against an initial sentence of six years for murder, and Pistorius was ultimately sentenced to 13 years and five months in prison.

Pistorius testified at his murder trial that he killed Steenkamp by mistake, thinking she was a dangerous intruder hiding in his bathroom in the middle of the night when he fired four times through the door with his licensed 9mm pistol. Prosecutors argued that Steenkamp, a 29-year-old model and reality TV star, had fled to the toilet cubicle during a late-night argument and Pistorius killed her in a rage.

Pistorius was eventually convicted of murder on a legal principle known as *dolus eventualis*, which means he acted with extreme recklessness and should have known that whoever was behind the door would likely be killed. It's comparable to third-degree murder.

Steenkamp's father, Barry Steenkamp, died in September. Her mother, June Steenkamp, did not oppose Pistorius' parole.

Rob Matthews, a South African man whose 21-year-old daughter was murdered in 2004 and who became a Steenkamp family friend, read out a statement from June Steenkamp outside the prison before the hearing in which she said she was not opposing his parole and didn't attend the hearing because "I simply cannot muster the energy to face him again at this stage."

Nevertheless, "I do not believe Oscar's version that he thought the person in the toilet was a burglar," June Steenkamp said in the statement. "In fact, I do not know anybody who does. My dearest child screamed for her life. ... I believe he knew it was Reeva."

While out on parole, Pistorius is expected to live at his uncle's luxurious mansion in a wealthy Pretoria suburb, where he stayed during his murder trial.

Pistorius was initially sent to Pretoria's central prison, a notorious apartheid-era jail. He was moved to the city's Atteridgeville Correctional Centre in 2016.

There have been only occasional glimpses of Pistorius' life behind bars over the past decade. His father has said he has been holding bible classes for fellow prisoners, although there have also been flashes of trouble, including an altercation Pistorius had with another inmate over a prison telephone that left him requiring medical treatment.

Steenkamp's killing happened when Pistorius was at the height of his fame and just months after he had become the first double-amputee to compete at the Olympics. He was also a multiple Paralympic sprinting champion and one of sport's most marketable figures, having overcome the amputation of both his legs below the knee as a baby to run on specially designed carbon-fiber blades.

At his sensational trial, prosecutors argued there was another side to Pistorius' life that involved guns and angry confrontations with others. Pistorius was also found guilty of a second charge of recklessly firing a gun in a restaurant.

Ireland's prime minister condemns anti-immigrant protesters who rampaged through central Dublin

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Ireland's prime minister on Friday condemned anti-immigrant protesters who rampaged through central Dublin after three young children were stabbed, saying the rioters simply wanted to cause chaos, not protect the country's way of life.

Police arrested 34 people overnight after up to 500 people looted shops, set fire to vehicles and threw rocks at crowd control officers equipped with helmets and shields. The violence began after rumors circulated that a foreign national was responsible for the attack outside a Dublin school on Thursday afternoon.

Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said Ireland's capital had endured two attacks — one on innocent children and the other on "our society and the rule of law."

"These criminals did not do what they did because they love Ireland, they did not do what they did because they wanted to protect Irish people, they did not do it out of any sense of patriotism, however warped," Varadkar told reporters on Friday morning. "They did so because they're filled with hate, they love violence, they love chaos, and they love causing pain to others."

A 5-year-old girl was in critical condition at a Dublin hospital and a teacher's aide was in serious condition, police said. A 6-year-old girl continues to receive treatment for less serious injuries and another child was discharged overnight. The alleged assailant, who was tackled by witnesses, remains hospitalized in serious condition.

The head of Ireland's national police force, Commissioner Drew Harris, said one officer was seriously injured in clashes with the rioters, some armed with metal bars and covering their faces.

Harris described the protesters as a "complete lunatic hooligan faction driven by far-right ideology."

Police said over 400 officers, including many in riot gear, were deployed throughout the city center to contain the unrest. A cordon was set up around the Irish Parliament building, Leinster House, and mounted officers were dispatched to nearby Grafton Street.

"These (riots) are scenes that we have not seen in decades, but what is clear is that people have been radicalized through social media and the internet," Harris told reporters on Friday.

"But I don't want to lose focus on the terrible event in terms of the dreadful assault on schoolchildren and their teacher," he said. "There's a full investigation ongoing. There's also a full investigation in respect on the disorder."

The Netherlands' longtime ruling party says it won't join a new government following far-right's win

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A senator from the Netherlands' Party for Freedom was appointed Friday to investigate possible governing coalitions in the aftermath of the far-right party's election victory, while the party of outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte said it would support a center-right administration in parliament but not join the next government.

The Party for Freedom, or PVV, led by veteran anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders, won 37 seats in the 150-seat lower house, indicating a seismic shift to the right for the Netherlands. Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy won 24, 10 fewer than in the previous election, according to a near complete count of Wednesday's votes.

After a meeting of party leaders at the parliament, PVV Senator Gert van Strien was appointed to investigate possible coalitions. Newly elected lawmakers will debate his findings on Dec. 6.

Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius, the new leader of People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, or VVD, said in a statement on X that after losing 10 seats in the election the longtime ruling party would "make possible and constructively support a center-right Cabinet with good policies" but would not join a government.

Wilders called the decision, which was announced before formal coalition talks had begun, "extremely disappointing."

The election result and appointment of Van Strien pave the way for Wilders to take the lead in forming a new coalition and potentially to succeed Rutte as prime minister. However, he will likely have to convince potential coalition partners that he would tone down some of his anti-Islam policies.

His party's election platform states that the Netherlands "is not an Islamic country. No Islamic schools, Qurans and mosques."

One potential coalition partner for Wilders is the recently formed New Social Contract party, or NSC, which won 20 seats. The party's centrist leader, Pieter Omtzigt, said he could not accept "unconstitutional" policies.

Article 1 of the Constitution of the Netherlands outlaws discrimination "on grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation or on any other grounds."

In an election-night victory speech, Wilders pledged not to push any policies that would breach Dutch law or the constitution.

Russian consumers feel themselves in a tight spot as high inflation persists

MOSCOW (AP) — The shelves at Moscow supermarkets are full of fruit and vegetables, cheese and meat. But many of the shoppers look at the selection with dismay as inflation makes their wallets feel empty.

Russia's Central Bank has raised its key lending rate four times this year to try to get inflation under control and stabilize the ruble's exchange rate as the economy weathers the effects of Russia's military operation in Ukraine and the Western sanctions imposed as a consequence.

The last time it raised the rate — to 15%, doubled that from the beginning of the year — the bank said it was concerned about prices that were increasing at an annualized pace of about 12%. The bank now forecasts inflation for the full year, as well as next year, to be about 7.5%.

Although that rate is high, it may be an understatement.

"If we talk in percentage terms, then, probably, (prices) increased by 25%. This is meat, staple products — dairy produce, fruits, vegetables, sausages. My husband can't live without sausage! Sometimes I'm just amazed at price spikes," said Roxana Gheltkova, a shopper in a Moscow supermarket.

Asked if her income as a pensioner was enough to keep food on the table, customer Lilya Tsarkova said: "No, of course not. I get help from my children."

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Without their assistance, "I don't know how to pay rent and food," the 70-year-old said.

Figures from the state statistical service Rosstat released on Nov. 1 show a huge spike in prices for some foods compared with 2022 — 74% for cabbage, 72% for oranges and 47% for cucumbers.

The Russian parliament has approved a 2024-2026 budget that earmarks a record amount for defense spending. Maxim Blant, a Russian economy analyst based in Latvia, sees that as an indication that prices will continue to rise sharply.

"It is simply impossible to solve the issue of inflation in conditions ... when the military-industrial complex receives unlimited funding, when everything they ask for is given to them, when the share of this military-industrial complex in the economy grows at a very rapid pace," he told The Associated Press.

The central bank's rate hikes have slightly cooled the ruble's exchange rate slide — the rate is now about 88 to the U.S. dollar from over 100 earlier. But that's still far higher than in the summer of 2022, when it was about 60 to the dollar.

That keeps the cost of imports high, even as import possibilities shrink due to Western sanctions.

Make noise! A murder and a movie stir Italians to loudly demand an end to violence against women

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — After the latest, horrifying killing of a college student allegedly by her resentful and jealous ex-boyfriend, students from Turin to Palermo have taken to pounding on classroom desks in unison to demand a stop to the slaying of women in Italy at the hands of men.

Just days before the killing of 22-year-old Giulia Cecchettin, Italians were already applauding a blockbuster movie about a woman who endures beatings and belittling by her overbearing husband. The movie is set in 1946, 24 years before divorce became legal in Italy and on the eve of the first time Italian women were allowed to vote. The film's exploration of the suffocating role of patriarchy in Italian society is painfully resonating today.

The moment is a remarkable confluence of fact and fiction, driving demands across Italy to protect women and to eradicate patriarchal mentalities woven into society.

Giulia Cecchettin disappeared after meeting her former boyfriend, Filippo Turetta, for a burger at a shopping mall, just days before she was to receive her degree in biomedical engineering at the University of Padua.

Her ex-beau, a year younger, friends and family said, resented that she had finished her studies ahead of him and feared she'd move on to pursue personal and professional dreams. Everything was ready to celebrate Cecchettin's degree — red bows were tied to the metal fence outside her family home in Vigonovo, a town of 10,000 people near Venice — and a restaurant was booked for family and friends.

While at the burger place, she texted her older sister, Elena, for advice on what shoes to buy for the ceremony. It was the last her family would hear from her.

"Giulia's case shook all of Italy," actress and director Paola Cortellesi said in an interview earlier this week in Rome. "Because in her disappearance, all of Italy knew that shortly there would have been the discovery of a young woman slain at the hands of a man."

"Because by now it's the same routine. It's chilling to call it a routine," she said, referring to Italian statistics indicating roughly every three days a woman is murdered in the country at the hands of a man — often a spouse, a partner or an ex.

For the seven days before Cecchettin's body was found, on Nov. 18 — covered by black plastic bags in a ditch near a lake in the foothills of the Alps — the nation's newscasts gave macabre updates.

A few kilometers (miles) from her home, an industrial complex's video camera on a deserted street captured the image of a man, alleged by investigators to be Turetta, chasing after Cecchettin who had bolted from the car before being struck repeatedly, knocked to the ground and bundled into the car, leaving hair and bloodstains on the sidewalk.

For days, roadside surveillance cameras recorded glimpses of Turetta's car, first in northern Italy, then

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Austria, then Germany. On Sunday, Nov. 19, German police checked on a car parked on a highway shoulder and out of gas. Inside was Turetta.

On Wednesday, a German court ordered his extradition to Italy for investigation of suspicion of murder. A medical examiner's report noted 26 wounds, apparently inflicted by a blade, on the woman's neck, arms and legs, Italian media said.

As the real-life drama of Cecchetin's killing played out, the movie "C'è ancora domani" (There's still tomorrow) riveted audiences across Italy.

Cortellesi, who directed the movie, said her work swept up audiences "beyond the ordinary, precisely because, as I have been saying, it hit a raw nerve in the lives of everybody." A noted Italian comic actress, Cortellesi also plays the lead role of Delia, an abused Roman wife hoping for a better future for her teenage daughter.

Cortellesi recounted how, at one screening, a woman stood up and revealed to a theater full of strangers that she, too, had an abusive husband, saying "I was Delia."

Among the film's fans is Daria Dicorpo, a middle-school teacher in Rome. "Unfortunately, the theme of violence against women is always actual," she said.

In the movie, women, from lower to upper classes, are told by their husbands to keep their opinions to themselves, or, more bluntly, to shut their mouth. "Instead, no, we have to yell, we have to communicate the beauty of being women," Dicorpo said.

Italians had previously taken to the streets in silent, torchlit marches to protest the slayings of women. But Elena Cecchetin, Giulia's sister, offered an alternative: "make noise" to honor her sister. "If you have keys, rattle them," she called out.

In a letter to *Corriere della Sera* daily, Elena Cecchetin dismissed descriptions of her sister's alleged murderer as a "monster." Killers are "not sick, they are the healthy sons of patriarchy," she wrote.

"Femicide isn't a crime of passion, it's a crime of power," Elena Cecchetin wrote, using a term that refers to the slaying of women precisely because they are women or because of the power men hold over women.

On Wednesday, after final passage of a bill to protect women with such measures as increased use of electronic monitoring devices for men stalking or threatening them, lawmakers from the opposition 5-Star Movement pounded rhythmically on their desks "in a minute of noise."

Director Cortellesi appealed to the two most powerful women in Italian politics today — far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni and Elly Schlein, who heads the Democratic Party, Parliament's largest force on the left. She asked them to "do something (about women's violence) that doesn't have anything to do with keeping their electorate happy," she said.

Schlein is pushing for bipartisan legislation to make lessons mandatory, starting in primary grades, to teach reciprocal respect between girls and boys, men and women. But the plan by Meloni's education minister envisions lessons on "relationships" for high schools.

Italy's RAI state TV reported that in the days since Cecchetin's body was found, calls to a national hotline for women fearing for their safety at the hands of men have jumped from some 200 to 400 a day— including from parents of young women.

"Women are afraid," said Oria Gargano, who heads Be Free, an organization fighting violence, sex trafficking and discrimination.

Among the handwritten notes tucked among the flowers, candles and bouquets left outside the Cecchetin family home was one reading: "Forgive us for not having done enough to change this culture."

What does the cease-fire between Israel and Hamas look like?

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — A temporary cease-fire agreement to facilitate the release of dozens of people taken hostage during Hamas' raid on Israel is expected to bring the first respite to war-weary Palestinians in Gaza and a glimmer of hope to the families of the captives.

After hitting a last-minute snag, the deal took effect Friday, a day later than originally planned. Under its

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terms, Israel and Hamas agreed to a four-day halt in hostilities. Palestinian prisoners held by Israel would also be freed as part of the agreement.

The deal was brokered by Qatar, the U.S. and Egypt and announced on Wednesday. It capped weeks of fitful indirect negotiations and set the stage for a tense period that could determine the course of the war, which was set off by Hamas' Oct. 7 raid.

Israel, Hamas and Qatar have released different details of the agreement, but those details do not appear to contradict one another.

WHAT'S IN THE DEAL?

Qatar announced that 50 hostages will be released in exchange for what Hamas said would be 150 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Those freed by both sides will be women and minors.

The plan is for the hostages, part of the 240 people abducted last month, to be released in bursts throughout the cease-fire. Once the first batch is released, Israel is expected to free the first group of Palestinian prisoners.

Those prisoners include many teenage boys detained during a wave of violence in the West Bank in 2022 or 2023 and charged with offenses such as stone-throwing or disturbing public order, according to a list of eligible prisoners published by Israel's Justice Ministry. Israel holds nearly 7,000 Palestinians accused or convicted of security offenses.

Israel said the truce would be extended by a day for every 10 additional hostages released.

Qatar said Israel would also allow more fuel and humanitarian aid into Gaza, but did not provide details.

Hamas said hundreds of trucks carrying humanitarian aid and fuel are to be allowed to enter Gaza every day as part of the deal. Supplies would also reach northern Gaza, the focus of Israel's ground offensive, for the first time, Hamas said.

Israel's government statement did not refer to increased aid and fuel deliveries. Israeli Channel 12 TV reported that as part of the deal, Israel will allow a "significant" amount of fuel and humanitarian supplies into Gaza, but did not specify how much.

Israel has severely limited the amount of aid, especially fuel, allowed into Gaza during the war, prompting dire shortages of water, food and fuel to run generators.

The fighting is expected to come to a temporary halt: Israeli jets and troops will hold their fire, while militants are expected to refrain from firing rockets at Israel.

Hamas said Israel's warplanes would stop flying over southern Gaza during the four-day truce and for six hours daily over the north. Israel made no mention of halting flights, and it wasn't clear if this would include its sophisticated intelligence drones, which have been a constant presence over Gaza.

WHAT'S BEEN LEFT OUT?

While several families will be thrilled to have their loved ones back, a significant number of hostages will likely remain in Hamas captivity, including men, women, older people and foreign nationals. The families who are not included in the current deal are likely to keep up the pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to try to secure their own loved ones' release with a future deal.

The plight of the families has gripped Israelis, and they have widespread support.

Netanyahu said Wednesday that under the deal, the International Committee of the Red Cross will visit the remaining hostages and provide them with any medicine they need. Neither Hamas nor the Red Cross confirmed that.

While the cease-fire will grant Palestinians in Gaza a brief calm, the hundreds of thousands who have fled the combat zone and headed south are not expected to be able to return home. Israeli troops are expected to remain in their positions in northern Gaza.

WHAT ARE THE DEAL'S POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS?

The deal involves only a short break in the fighting. Israel, which has made destroying Hamas and saving the captives its goals, is expected to continue where it left off once the cease-fire ends.

Netanyahu said that the cease-fire will allow the army to prepare for the continued fighting and will not harm its war effort — and that the war would continue once it expires.

When it does, airstrikes will likely resume and troops will continue their push throughout northern Gaza

before their expected foray into the south at an unknown time. Gaza residents will have to brace for a resumption of hostilities.

A break in fighting would also grant Hamas time to strategize, shift around militant positions and perhaps regroup after Israel claimed it had killed large numbers of fighters and destroyed many of the group's military assets.

The staggered nature of the deal also opens the door for Hamas to up its demands on the fly, in the hopes that Israel would make more concessions to release more hostages.

Yehya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza and presumed mastermind of the Oct. 7 attack, could also try to turn a four-day pause in fighting into a longer cease-fire by offering to release more hostages. A longer truce would make it harder for Israel to restart the war, both operationally and in the eyes of global public opinion.

The Israeli government would face growing domestic pressure to secure the release of more hostages. Families left out of the current deal will only become more determined to see their loved ones freed once they've seen the first groups leave captivity.

Violent clashes break out in Dublin after knife attack that injured 3 children, one seriously

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Violent clashes broke out in central Dublin on Thursday evening, with vehicles torched and riot police attacked, after a 5-year-old girl was seriously injured in a knife attack earlier in the day that also saw a woman and two other young children hospitalized.

Irish police said the girl was receiving emergency medical treatment in a Dublin hospital following the attack outside a school. Soon after that announcement, at least 100 people took to the streets, some armed with metal bars and covering their faces.

Police said over 400 officers including many in riot gear, were deployed in Dublin city center to contain the unrest, which they said was "caused by a small group of thugs." A police cordon was also set up around the Irish Parliament building, Leinster House, and officers from the Mounted Support Unit were in nearby Grafton Street.

There were clashes with riot police as some demonstrators let off flares and fireworks, while others grabbed chairs and stools outside bars and restaurants.

A number of police vehicles and a tram were damaged during the disorder, while a bus and car were also set on fire on the city's O'Connell Bridge.

Shop windows were routinely smashed and a Foot Locker store was looted. All public transport in the city — trams and buses — was suspended and many firms have urged their staff to work from home on Friday.

"We have a complete lunatic hooligan faction driven by far-right ideology, and also then this disruptive tendency engaged in serious violence," said Ireland's top police officer, Drew Harris.

Police and politicians called for calm and warned against misinformation over the attack earlier in the day.

"The scenes we are witnessing this evening in our city center cannot and will not be tolerated," said Justice Minister Helen McEntee. "A thuggish and manipulative element must not be allowed to use an appalling tragedy to wreak havoc."

Earlier, police said a man in his 50s, who also was seriously injured, is a "person of interest" in their investigation. No other details about his identity were revealed.

At a press briefing in the evening, Harris was asked about a potential terrorist link, and he didn't rule it out.

"I have never ruled out any possible motive for this attack ... all lines of inquiry are open to determine the motive for this attack," he said.

That appeared to be a slight change in stance from earlier, when Superintendent Liam Geraghty said police were keeping an open mind in terms of the investigation but were "satisfied there is no terrorist link."

A woman in her 30s also suffered serious injuries during the knife attack shortly after 1:30 p.m. The two other children, a 5-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl, sustained less serious injuries. and the boy was discharged from a hospital,

Geraghty said at a media briefing that preliminary indications are that a man attacked a number of people on Parnell Square East.

He said that police believe that it was "a standalone incident, not necessarily connected to any wider issues that are ongoing in the country or in the city, and we need to identify the exact reasons for that happening."

Geraghty confirmed earlier witness reports that a knife was used in the attack, but he couldn't provide more details on the nature of the injuries. He also confirmed that witnesses sought to disarm the man as soon as they saw what was going on.

"My understanding is members of the public did intervene at a very, very early stage and we would applaud those members of the public for getting involved in such a traumatic and potentially dangerous situation for themselves," Geraghty said.

South Africa, Colombia and others are fighting drugmakers over access to TB and HIV drugs

By GERALD IMRAY and MARIA CHENG Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — South Africa, Colombia and other countries that lost out in the global race for coronavirus vaccines are taking a more combative approach towards drugmakers and pushing back on policies that deny cheap treatment to millions of people with tuberculosis and HIV.

Experts see it as a shift in how such countries deal with pharmaceutical behemoths and say it could trigger more efforts to make lifesaving medicines more widely available.

In the COVID-19 pandemic, rich countries bought most of the world's vaccines early, leaving few shots for poor countries and creating a disparity the World Health Organization called "a catastrophic moral failure."

Now, poorer countries are trying to become more self-reliant "because they've realized after COVID they can't count on anyone else," said Brook Baker, who studies treatment-access issues at Northeastern University.

One of the targets is a drug, bedaquiline, that is used for treating people with drug-resistant versions of tuberculosis. The pills are especially important for South Africa, where TB killed more than 50,000 people in 2021, making it the country's leading cause of death.

In recent months, activists have protested efforts by Johnson & Johnson to protect its patent on the drug. In March, TB patients petitioned the Indian government, calling for cheaper generics; the government ultimately agreed J&J's patent could be broken. Belarus and Ukraine then wrote to J&J, also asking it to drop its patents, but with little response.

In July, J&J's patent on the drug expired in South Africa, but the company had it extended until 2027, enraging activists who accused it of profiteering.

The South African government then began investigating the company's pricing policies. It had been paying about 5,400 rand (\$282) per treatment course, more than twice as much as poor countries that got the drug via a global effort called the Stop TB partnership.

In September, about a week after South Africa's probe began, J&J announced that it would drop its patent in more than 130 countries, allowing generic-makers to copy the drug.

"This addresses any misconception that access to our medicines is limited," the company said.

Christophe Perrin, a TB expert at Doctors Without Borders, called J&J's reversal "a big surprise" because aggressive patent protection was typically a "cornerstone" of pharmaceutical companies' strategy.

Meanwhile, in Colombia, the government declared last month that it would issue a compulsory license for the HIV drug dolutegravir without permission from the drug's patent-holder, Viiiv Healthcare. The decision came after more than 120 groups asked the Colombian government to expand access to the

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WHO-recommended drug.

"This is Colombia taking the reins after the extreme inequity of COVID and challenging a major pharmaceutical to ensure affordable AIDS treatment for its people," said Peter Maybarduk of the Washington advocacy group Public Citizen. He noted that Brazilian activists are pushing their government to make a similar move.

Still, some experts said much more needs to change before poorer countries can produce their own medicines and vaccines.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Africa produced fewer than 1% of all vaccines made globally but used more than half of the world's supply, according to Petro Terblanche, managing director of Afrigen Biologics. The company is part of a WHO-backed effort to produce a COVID vaccine using the same mRNA technology as those made by Pfizer and Moderna.

Terblanche estimated about 14 million people died of AIDS in Africa in the late 1990s-2000s, when countries couldn't get the necessary medicines.

Back then, President Nelson Mandela's government in South Africa eventually suspended patents to allow wider access to AIDS drugs. That prompted more than 30 drugmakers to take it to court in 1998, in a case dubbed "Mandela vs. Big Pharma."

Doctors Without Borders described the episode as "a public relations disaster" for the drug companies, which dropped the lawsuit in 2001.

Terblanche said that Africa's past experience during the HIV epidemic has proven instructive.

"It's not acceptable for a listed company to hold intellectual property that stands in the way of saving lives and so, we will see more countries fighting back," she said.

Challenging pharmaceutical companies is just one piece to ensuring Africa has equal access to treatments and vaccines, Terblanche said. More robust health systems are critical.

"If we can't get (vaccines and medicines) to the people who need them, they aren't useful," she said.

Yet some experts pointed out that South Africa's own intellectual property laws still haven't been changed sufficiently and make it too easy for pharmaceutical companies to acquire patents and extend their monopolies.

While many other developing countries allow legal challenges to a patent or a patent extension, South Africa has no clear law that allows it to do that, said Lynette Keneilwe Mabote-Eyde, a health care activist who consults for the nonprofit Treatment Action Group.

The South African department of health didn't respond to a request for comment regarding drug procurement and patents.

Andy Gray, who advises the South African government on essential medicines, said J&J's recent decision to not enforce its patent may have more to do with the drug's limited future earnings than caving to pressure from activists.

"Because bedaquiline is not ever going to sell in huge volumes in high-income countries, it's the sort of product they would love to offload at some stage and perhaps earn a royalty from," said Gray, a senior lecturer in pharmacology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

In its annual report on TB released earlier this month, the World Health Organization said there were more than 10 million people sickened by the disease last year and 1.3 million deaths. After COVID-19, tuberculosis is the world's deadliest infectious disease and it is now the top killer of people with HIV. WHO noted only about 2 in 5 people with drug-resistant TB are being treated.

Zolelwa Sifumba, a South African doctor, was diagnosed with drug-resistant TB in 2012 when she was a medical student and endured 18 months of treatment taking about 20 pills every day in addition to daily injections, which left her in "immense pain" and resulted in some hearing loss. Bedaquiline was not rolled out as a standard treatment in South Africa until 2018.

"I wanted to quit (treatment) every single day," she said. Since her recovery, Sifumba has become an advocate for better TB treatment, saying it makes little sense to charge poor countries high prices for essential medicines.

"TB is everywhere but the burden of it is in your lower and middle income countries," she said. "If the

lower income countries can't get it (the drug), then what's the point? Who are you making it for?"

Maui residents wonder if their burned town can be made safe. The answer? No one knows

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

When Daniel Skousen scrubs at the ash and soot covering his Maui home, he worries about the smell.

What chemicals created the burning-trash-barrel scent that has lingered since a deadly wildfire tore through Lahaina in August? Should he believe government agencies' assessment of when the air, land and water will be safe enough for his family to return?

Or will political and economic pressures to rebuild and restore Maui's robust tourism industry — where visitors normally spend \$14 million per day — lead officials to look at any testing results through rose-colored glasses?

"It appears very important to them to get that tourism tax revenue back," said Skousen. "It makes you wonder if the testing will be biased."

The fire blew out Skousen's windows and filled his home with ash, but the building is still standing, and he hopes someday to move back in. The home next door burned to the ground.

Skousen wants a second opinion on any government environmental assessments, preferably from an expert with a stake in the community. But the raw data isn't easy to find, and experts say the long-term health effects from fires like the one that incinerated Lahaina are mostly unknown. There are no national standards that detail how clean is clean enough for a residential home damaged by a nearby fire.

At least 100 people died in the Aug. 8 wildfire, and thousands were displaced. Nearly 7,000 were still in short-term lodging two months later.

The rubble left behind includes electrical cables, plastic pipes and vehicle tires that emit dangerous dioxins when burned; lead from melted vehicles or old house paint; and arsenic-laden ash from termite-resistant building materials.

After a major wildfire burned 1,000 homes in Boulder County, Colorado, in 2021, health officials learned that even professionally remediated homes were often still polluted with ash, char and other toxic substances long after the fire, said Bill Hayes, the county's air quality program coordinator.

The reason? High winds — like those that plagued Maui during the wildfire this summer — forced fine particulate matter into every crevice, Hayes said. Those particulates would sit inside window panes, behind light switches, between shingles and elsewhere until the winds started up again, re-contaminating the home.

"Char is a carcinogen, so we don't ever say any level of those particulates are safe," Hayes said. "That became a challenge in the cleanup — determining the level of when is it clean enough?"

State and federal agencies have released regular updates on Lahaina's relative safety. The water in much of the town is still unsafe to drink, and visitors have been advised to use protective gear in impacted areas. Officials say pregnant people and kids should stay out of the burn zone, though the Hawaii Department of Education says the schools, which are above the burned part of town, are safe.

Crews have installed air quality monitors throughout town and are spraying a soil sealant to prevent toxic ash from being washed into the ocean or blowing around.

An attorney representing Skousen and about two dozen other Lahaina residents sent a public records request to the Environmental Protection Agency last month asking for all records regarding residential testing of contaminants in Lahaina and their impact to human health.

The EPA's reply, sent earlier this month, wasn't reassuring: "No records could be located that are responsive to your request."

EPA spokesman Kellen Ashford told The Associated Press his agency did some environmental hazard testing in the burn zone, but only to determine the immediate risk for workers involved in the initial cleanup.

He referred further questions about such testing to the Hawaii Department of Health, which he said was responsible for determining longer-term safety for residents.

The Hawaii Department of Health's Environmental Health Services Division also told Skousen's attorney

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it had no records about residential testing of contaminants to release.

The Health Department declined interview requests. Spokesman Shawn Hamamoto said in an email the department will pursue additional air quality and ash testing when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers begins removing debris from Lahaina.

"I think that they're playing 'hide the ball,'" said Skousen's attorney, Edward Neiger. "The question is, why do they feel the need to hide anything?"

Ashford acknowledged some residents are skeptical of the cleanup efforts. He said the EPA has people stationed at the Lahaina Civic Center and at work sites to talk to community members about their concerns.

Andrew Shoemaker, a fine art photographer who operated a gallery on Lahaina's famous Front Street, believes it's an important part of healing to go back to the burned areas to see what is left, but he has recently had a lung infection and doesn't want to risk his health.

"I don't even want to take the chance of going over there," he said.

Dioxins, toxic compounds that can be released when plastic pipes, tires and other household materials are burned, are a particular concern for Shoemaker. Dioxins can last for decades inside the human body, and can cause reproductive and developmental problems, damage the immune system, interfere with hormones and cause cancer, according to the World Health Organization.

The EPA has found that forest fires and household trash burning in backyard burn barrels — how Skousen now describes the scent of Lahaina — are both major sources of dioxin emissions.

Irva Hertz-Picciotto, a professor and environmental epidemiologist with University of California-Davis, said the air monitors are effective and can measure particles that are about 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair.

Still, there is a lot that scientists don't yet know about the long-term health risks posed by fires, Hertz-Picciotto said.

That post-fire smell noticed by Skousen can be a result of off-gassing, she said, which occurs when volatile organic compounds are absorbed into surfaces and released later.

Even with careful air quality monitoring, off-gassing can expose residents and cleanup workers to toxic fire emissions for months, and research shows only some volatile organic compounds can be trapped by high-quality air particle filters, according to the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences at the University of Colorado Boulder.

"If it smells like burned plastic or burned electrical cables, then probably those chemicals are in the air and not healthy," Hertz-Picciotto said. "The other side of that, though, is even if you can't smell it that doesn't mean it's safe."

Skousen is a teacher and runs a cleaning business on the side. He's spent his off hours in Lahaina working on cleaning his and his neighbors' homes. Skousen and his wife decided to homeschool their kids at their temporary residence outside of Lahaina for now rather than risk exposing them to possible health problems.

Most of the guidelines for human exposure to pollutants are based on industrial settings, where people might work 40 hours a week — not their homes, where they might spend 90% of their time, said Hayes, the Boulder County air quality coordinator. Whether a home can be made safe enough for residency comes down in part to the resident's risk tolerance, Hayes said.

"There is no black-and-white, clear-cut answer," he said. "If they have young children in the home, or anyone has respiratory conditions, they might want to do significantly more cleaning than what the guidance documents are recognizing."

Ohio voters just passed abortion protections. Whether they take effect is now up to the courts

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio's new constitutional protections for abortion access and other reproductive rights are supposed to take effect Dec. 7, a month after voters resoundingly passed them. That prospect seems increasingly uncertain.

Existing abortion-related lawsuits are moving again through the courts now that voters have decided the issue, raising questions about how and when the amendment will be implemented.

The amendment declared an individual's right to "make and carry out one's own reproductive decisions" and passed with a strong 57% majority. It was the seventh straight victory in statewide votes for supporters of abortion access nationally since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned constitutional protections.

But the amendment did not repeal any existing Ohio laws, providing an opening for Republican elected officials and anti-abortion groups to renew their efforts to halt, delay or significantly water it down.

"A lot of that hard work of figuring out what state laws are inconsistent with the amendment and what state laws can remain, does tend to devolve to the courts," said Laura Hermer, a professor of law at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota, who studies access to health coverage and care in the U.S. "It's difficult to imagine that the Legislature will say, 'All right, you win. We're going to repeal the heartbeat ban' and so forth."

The state Legislature is controlled by Republicans whose leaders opposed the November ballot amendment, which was known as Issue 1. The Ohio Supreme Court also is controlled by Republicans, who have a 4-3 majority, and will be the final judge of constitutional questions. Several of the Republican justices have taken actions or made statements that have caused abortion rights organizations and ethics attorneys to question their objectivity on the subject.

Minority Democrats in the Ohio House announced legislation two days after the election aimed at avoiding a piecemeal approach to implementing the amendment. Among other steps, they called for repealing the state's ban on most abortions after fetal cardiac activity is detected, which is around six weeks, and a 24-hour waiting period.

"There are over 30 different restrictions in place," said state Rep. Beth Liston, a physician and co-author of the Reproductive Care Act. "And I think that it is important that we don't require citizens to go to court for every restriction, and, quite frankly, that we don't let harm occur in the interim."

House Minority Leader Allison Russo was careful not to criticize the high court, which holds sway over the fate of those laws.

"My hope is they will uphold the rule of law and the constitution," she said.

Chief Justice Sharon Kennedy last week ordered lawyers for the state and a group of abortion clinics to tell the court how they believe the measure's passage has affected a case involving Ohio's ban on most abortions once fetal cardiac activity is detected, which has been on hold since October 2022.

A day after voters approved the amendment, U.S. District Judge Michael Barrett made a similar request of the parties in a long-running federal lawsuit challenging a set of state restrictions imposed on abortion providers' operations. They included a requirement that clinics obtain agreements with a nearby hospital for emergency patient transfers, as well as a prohibition against public hospitals entering into those agreements.

At least three other Ohio abortion laws also have been on hold in the courts.

Passing legislation to bring Ohio law in line with the new constitutional amendment has been a non-starter with Republican lawmakers, who mostly opposed it and took extraordinary steps to defeat it.

With a primary election in their GOP-heavy districts only months away, they are facing fierce pressure from anti-abortion groups to go in the other direction and either pass laws countering the amendment or using their supermajorities to strip courts of their power to interpret it.

"The (Ohio) Constitution specifically says reigning in out-of-control courts is the legislators' job," the anti-abortion group Faith2Action argues in a recently released video. "So let's call on the legislators to do

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their job, to use their constitutionally granted right to represent us and to keep pro-abortion judges from repealing Ohio laws based on an amendment that doesn't even mention a single Ohio law."

The video argues that the "right to life" created in Ohio's constitution is inalienable and that the U.S. Supreme Court's decision overturning *Roe v. Wade* punted the abortion issue to "the people's elected representatives."

But in his concurring opinion in that ruling, Justice Brett Kavanaugh, an appointee of former President Donald Trump, wrote that constitutional amendments were among the avenues for deciding the future of abortion access.

"Moreover, the Constitution authorizes the creation of new rights — state and federal, statutory and constitutional," Kavanaugh wrote. "But when it comes to creating new rights, the Constitution directs the people to the various processes of democratic self-government contemplated by the Constitution — state legislation, state constitutional amendments, federal legislation, and federal constitutional amendments."

For now, Republican Ohio House Speaker Jason Stephens has said legislation targeting the power of state courts will not be considered. GOP Senate President Matt Huffman has ruled out lawmakers pushing for an immediate repeal of Issue 1, as had once been suggested, saying nothing like that should be tried, at least in 2024.

How Attorney General Dave Yost will proceed also is being closely watched.

In a legal analysis of Issue 1 that the Republican published before the election, Yost said the amendment created a new standard for protecting abortion access that "goes beyond" the law of the land under *Roe v. Wade*.

"That means that many Ohio laws would probably be invalidated ... and others might be at risk to varying degrees," he wrote.

Hermer, the law professor, said that statement is convenient for lawyers fighting to implement the constitutional amendment but such an analysis isn't legally binding for Yost.

"He doesn't necessarily have to stand down, but, of course, having already said that, it's going to make it a bit more difficult to hold those sorts of positions," she said.

Retailers offer big deals for Black Friday but will shoppers spend?

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Expect big discounts and other enticements to lure shoppers to stores for Black Friday. But retailers worry those may not be enough.

Consumers are coming under pressure as their savings dwindle and their credit card debt grows. And although they have gotten some relief from easing inflation, many goods and services like meat and rent are still far higher than they were just three years ago.

Barbara Lindquist, 85, from Hawthorne Woods, Illinois, said she and her husband plan to spend about \$1,000 for holiday gifts for her three adult children, 13 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. That's about the same as last year.

But Lindquist, who continues to work as a pre-school teacher at a local church, said she'll be more focused on deals given still high prices on meat and other staples. And she plans to buy more gift cards, which she believes will help her stick to her budget.

"I go for value," said Lindquist, who just picked up discounted sheets and towels at Kohl's for friends who will be visiting from Panama during the holidays.

Many retailers had already ordered fewer goods for this holiday season and have pushed holiday sales earlier in October than last year to help shoppers spread out their spending. An early shopping push appears to be a trend that only got more pronounced during the pandemic when clogs in the supply network in 2021 made people buy early for fear of not getting what they wanted.

But retailers said that many shoppers will be focusing more on deals and will likely wait until the last minute. Best Buy said it's pushing more items at opening price points, while Kohl's has simplified its deals, promoting items under a certain price point like \$25 at its stores.

Target said shoppers are waiting longer to buy items. For example, instead of buying sweatshirts or

denim back in August or September, they held out until the weather turned cold.

"It's clear that consumers have been remarkably resilient," Target's CEO Brian Cornell told analysts last week. "Yet in our research, things like uncertainty, caution and managing a budget are top of mind."

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, expects shoppers will spend more this year than last year, but their pace will slow given all the economic uncertainty.

The group has forecast that U.S. holiday sales will rise 3% to 4% for November through December, compared with a 5.4% growth of a year ago. The pace is consistent with the average annual holiday increase of 3.6% from 2010 to pre-pandemic 2019. Americans ramped up spending during the pandemic, with more money in their pockets from federal relief checks and nowhere to go during lockdowns. For the holiday 2021 season, sales for the two-month period surged 12.7%.

Online discounts should be better than a year ago, particularly for toys, electronics and clothing, according to Adobe Analytics, which tracks online spending. It predicts toys will be discounted on average by 35%, compared with 22% a year ago, while electronics should see 30% cuts, compared with last year's 27%. In clothing, shoppers will see an average discount of 25%, compared with 19% last year, Adobe said.

Analysts consider the five-day Black Friday weekend — which includes the Monday after the holiday known as Cyber Monday — a key barometer of shoppers' willingness to spend. And Black Friday is expected to be once again the busiest shopping day of the year, according to Sensormatic Solutions, a firm that tracks store traffic. On average, the top 10 busiest shopping days in the U.S are expected to once again account for roughly 40% of all holiday retail traffic, Sensormatic said.

Marshal Cohen, chief retail adviser at Circana, a market research firm, said he thinks that shoppers will just stick to a list and not buy on impulse. He also believes they will take their time buying throughout the season.

"There's no sense of urgency," Cohen said. "The consumers are saying, 'I will shop when it's convenient for me.'"

Sea turtle nests break records on US beaches, but global warming threatens their survival

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Just as they have for millions of years, sea turtles by the thousands made their labored crawl from the ocean to U.S. beaches to lay their eggs over the past several months. This year, record nesting was found in Florida and elsewhere despite growing concern about threats from climate change.

In Florida, preliminary state statistics show more than 133,840 loggerhead turtle nests, breaking a record set in 2016. Same for green turtles, where the estimate of at least 76,500 nests is well above the previous mark set in 2017.

High sea turtle nest numbers also have been reported in South Carolina, Alabama, North Carolina and Georgia, although not all set records like Florida, where Justin Perrault, vice president of research at Loggerhead Marinelifelife Center in Juno Beach, said the number of nests is remarkable this year.

"We had more nests than we had ever seen before on our local beaches," said Perrault, whose organization monitors Palm Beach County and broke a local record by 4,000 nests. "That's quite a bit of nesting."

There are seven species of sea turtles: loggerhead, green, leatherback, hawksbill, Kemp's ridley, olive ridley and flatback. All are considered either endangered or threatened. They come ashore on summer nights, digging pits in the sand and depositing dozens of eggs before covering them up and returning to the sea. Florida beaches are one of the most important hatcheries for loggerheads in the world.

Only about one in 1,000 sea turtle hatchlings live to adulthood. They face myriad natural threats, including predators on land and in the ocean, disruptions to nests and failure to make it to the water after hatching. This year along one stretch of Florida's Gulf Coast where 75 nests had been counted, most were wiped out by the surge from Hurricane Idalia in August.

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"Unfortunately, the nests pre-Idalia were almost all lost due to the high tides and flooding on our barrier islands," said Carly Oakley, senior turtle conservation biologist at Clearwater Marine Aquarium.

Female turtles generally lay eggs in a three-year cycle, leading to up-and-down years of nests, she said. "The nesting process is very exhausting and, in this break, females regain the energy to do the process again," Oakley said.

Climate change has added to those challenges, reducing beaches as sea levels rise and causing more powerful tropical storms. Hotter air, water and sand and changes in the ocean currents turtles use to migrate also lower the odds of surviving, according to Oceana, an international conservation group.

Sand temperatures play a major role in determining sea turtle sex. In general, warmer temperatures produce more female turtles, and sand temperatures are projected to increase dramatically around the world by 2100, according to researchers at Florida State University.

"So the warmer the nest is, the more likely that nest is to produce females," Perrault said. "Additionally, hatchlings that come out of warmer nests are much smaller and often slower."

A study led by FSU professor Mariana Fuentes that was published recently in the *Global Change Biology* journal found sea turtles will have to nest much later or much earlier than they currently do to cope with changing environmental conditions.

Even that may not be enough for every species, said Fuentes, who works in FSU's Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science. Turtles have adapted to altered climates over millions of years, but today's rapid changes could happen too quickly for them to evolve, she said.

"We have found that even if they do change the timing of their nesting, that's not going to be sufficient to maintain the temperatures of current nesting grounds," Fuentes said.

Sea turtle mothers already have to lumber out of the water to find a good spot to nest, which can be difficult in areas where humans have built seawalls. Some female turtles make several attempts, known as false crawls, before finding a suitable location.

Racoons, coyotes and other predators raid the nests and hatchlings, once they dig their way out, have to crawl to the sea before being snatched up by birds and other animals. Electric lights can disorient them, causing turtles to head the wrong way on the beach instead of following light from the moon and stars. And when the lucky ones finally start swimming, hungry fish await.

Michelle Pate, biologist at the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, said tens of thousands of hatchlings don't make it to the water, even as nest numbers trend higher across much of the Southeast.

"If we can't get hatchlings to emerge and make it to the ocean, then an increase in nest numbers doesn't help," she said.

The increase in turtle nests this year conceals an ominous future for the animals, Perrault said.

"Yes, we're seeing record numbers, but our hatchling production may not be that great," he said. "And so in the future, 20 to 30 years from now, and these things come back to nest, we may not be seeing these record numbers that we're seeing now."

Qatar says Gaza cease-fire will begin Friday morning, with aid to follow 'as soon as possible'

By WAFAA SHURAF, NAJIB JOBAIN and JACK JEFFERY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A four-day cease-fire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas was set to begin Friday morning, Qatar said after a daylong delay extended the agony for those hoping for some relief from the deal, which is to bring the release of dozens of hostages held by militants and Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The diplomatic breakthrough promised some relief for the 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza who have endured weeks of Israeli bombardment, as well as families in Israel fearful for the fate of their loved ones taken captive during Hamas' Oct. 7 attack that triggered the war.

The cease-fire was originally set to begin Thursday morning, but it appeared to hit a snag the night before when Israel's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, announced a one-day delay without providing

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a reason.

On Thursday, Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari announced the cease-fire will start at 7 a.m. local time Friday (5 a.m. GMT).

He said the two sides had exchanged lists of those to be released, and the first group of 13 women and children held by Hamas would be freed Friday afternoon. He did not say how many Palestinian prisoners would be freed, but officials have said three would be freed for every hostage.

Increased aid for Palestinians will start to enter Gaza "as soon as possible," al-Ansari said. The hope is that the "momentum" from this deal will lead to an "end to this violence," he told reporters.

RISING TOLL IN GAZA

Israeli airstrikes continued Thursday. In the afternoon, a strike leveled a residential building in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. At least 12 people were killed, according to officials at nearby Al-Aqsa Hospital.

One resident, Hosni Moharib, said his wife and several children were killed and other relatives remained buried under the rubble.

"It exploded on the house, striking the babies and young children. Everyone in the house, they are all dead," he said, bursting into tears.

The Israeli bombardment, now in its seventh week, has killed more than 13,300 Palestinians, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza, which resumed its detailed count of casualties in Gaza from the war. The ministry had stopped publishing casualty counts since Nov. 11, saying it had lost the ability to do so because of the health system's collapse in the north,

The new numbers were not fully broken down, but women and minors have consistently made up around two-thirds of the dead. The figures do not include updated numbers from hospitals in the north. The ministry says some 6,000 people have been reported missing, feared buried under rubble.

The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its death tolls. Israel says it has killed thousands of Hamas fighters, without presenting evidence for its count.

NETANYAHU SAYS TRUCE WON'T END WAR

The truce agreement raised hopes of eventually winding down the war, which has leveled vast swaths of Gaza, fueled a surge of violence in the occupied West Bank and stirred fears of a wider conflagration across the Middle East.

Air-raid sirens sounded across northern Israel on Thursday as Hezbollah said it fired 48 Katyusha rockets from southern Lebanon. The barrage came after an Israeli strike killed five Hezbollah fighters, including the son of the head of the group's parliamentary bloc.

The Israeli military said it was striking the sources of the launches. Israel and Hezbollah, which fought a monthlong war in 2006, have repeatedly traded fire across the border since the war in Gaza broke out.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue the war after the truce expires to destroy Hamas' military capabilities, end its 16-year rule in Gaza and return all the estimated 240 captives held in Gaza by Hamas and other groups.

"We will continue it until we achieve all our goals," Netanyahu said, adding that he had delivered the same message in a phone call to U.S. President Joe Biden. Washington has provided extensive military and diplomatic support to Israel since the start of the war.

In Gaza's city of Khan Younis, Palestinians welcomed the respite of the upcoming cease-fire but said four days would do little to relieve the humanitarian disaster caused by the war.

"God willing, it becomes a total cease-fire," said Jihan Qanan. "People have had houses brought down on their heads, they've been expelled ... There's no homes, no money, no possessions. The whole world is wrecked."

SURROUNDING JABALIYA

The Israeli military said combat operations would continue until it was ordered to hold fire, and chief spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said troops would remain in place during the truce. Israeli forces hold much of northern Gaza, where they say they have dismantled tunnels and much of Hamas' infrastructure

there.

The military said it has surrounded the Jabaliya refugee camp and called on any residents inside to evacuate Thursday. The military has said it is pursuing Hamas fighters in Jabaliya, a dense urban district adjacent to Gaza City that has been heavily bombarded for weeks.

The military said Thursday it detained the director of Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, Mohammed Abu Selmia, for questioning over his involvement in what it called "extensive" Hamas activities in the hospital. Gaza's Health Ministry condemned Abu Selmia's arrest and called on international bodies to intervene.

A day earlier, Israel showed a tunnel and rooms that military officials said were a major Hamas hideout beneath Shifa. Hamas and hospital staff deny Israeli allegations that Shifa was used as a militant command center. Hagari said Israel has mapped out Shifa Hospital and plans to destroy all "terror infrastructure" it has found.

Ahmed El-Mokhallalati, a plastic surgeon working at Shifa, said 150 patients are still there, with only two doctors, a nurse and three volunteer workers to care for them. "My colleagues and I are unable to continue providing treatment to patients," El-Mokhallalati said on X.

Israel has threatened to extend its invasion to southern Gaza, where most of the territory's population is now located. More than 1 million people, including hundreds of thousands who fled the north, have crammed into overflowing U.N.-run shelters with dwindling food, water and basic supplies.

For Hamas, the cease-fire would provide an opportunity to regroup after weeks of apparently heavy losses. Hamas leader Yehya Sinwar, who is believed to be alive and in hiding in Gaza, is likely to claim the release of Palestinian prisoners as a major achievement and declare victory if the war ends.

HOSTAGES TO BE FREED IN STAGES

Under the truce deal, 50 hostages are supposed to be freed in stages, in exchange for the release of what Hamas said would be 150 Palestinian prisoners. Women and children would be released first, and Israel said the truce would be extended an extra day for every additional 10 hostages freed.

The return of hostages could lift spirits in Israel, where their plight has gripped the country. Families of the hostages have staged mass demonstrations to pressure the government to bring them home. Netanyahu's office said it notified the families of hostages listed for release Friday.

Hamas said 200 trucks a day will enter Gaza carrying aid. Qatar said the aid will include fuel, but has given no details on quantities.

Israel cut off all imports at the start of the war, except for a trickle of food, water and medical supplies allowed in from Egypt. The lack of fuel has caused a territory-wide blackout, leaving homes and hospitals reliant on faltering generators.

Israel's Justice Ministry published a list of 300 prisoners eligible to be released, mainly teenagers detained over the past year for rock-throwing and other minor offenses.

The war erupted when several thousand Hamas militants stormed into southern Israel, killing at least 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking scores of hostages, including babies, women and older adults, as well as soldiers, for whom Hamas is expected to demand a large number of high-profile prisoners.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams accused of 1993 sexual assault in legal filing

NEW YORK (AP) — New York City Mayor Eric Adams has been accused of sexually assaulting a woman in 1993, according to a legal summons filed Wednesday.

The three-page filing does not contain details of the alleged assault but names Adams, the transit bureau of the New York Police Department and the New York Police Department Guardians Association as defendants.

"Plaintiff was sexually assaulted by Defendant Eric Adams in New York, New York in 1993 while they both worked for the City of New York," the summons reads.

The filing seeks a trial and \$5 million in relief. It was filed in state Supreme Court in Manhattan. The woman's attorney did not immediately return an emailed request for comment on Thursday.

In remarks to reporters on Thursday, Adams denied sexually assaulting anyone and said he did not remember meeting the woman.

"It absolutely did not happen. I don't recall ever meeting this person and I would never harm anyone in that magnitude. It did not happen," Adams said, according to a video posted by a reporter to X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter. "It did not happen, and that is not who I am and that is not who I've ever been in my professional life and, you know, it's just something that never took place."

Adams, a Democrat, was a New York City police officer who rose to the rank of captain before entering politics. He served as a state senator and Brooklyn borough president before becoming mayor.

The summons was filed under the Adult Survivors Act, a special New York law that created a year-long suspension of the usual time limit to sue over an alleged sexual assault. The suit against Adams was filed just before the window to bring cases under the law was scheduled to close after Thanksgiving.

The law cleared the way for a wave of lawsuits against famous men accused of sexual misconduct, with a slew of cases coming in the final weeks before it was set to expire. Over the past year, the act has led to more than 2,500 lawsuits, including cases against former President Donald Trump, hip hop mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs and comedian and actor Russell Brand.

The filing comes as Adams has been dogged by an FBI investigation into his 2021 campaign that prompted agents to seize his phones and raid the home of his chief campaign fundraiser.

The New York Times and New York Post have reported that part of the investigation involves examining whether Adams inappropriately tried to help the government of Turkey get city approval to open a 35-story skyscraper housing diplomatic facilities in 2021, despite concerns about the tower's fire safety systems.

Adams has sidestepped questions about the FBI investigation but has maintained he did nothing wrong.

FBI ends investigation of car wreck at Niagara Falls bridge, no indication of terrorism

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. (AP) — The FBI has ended its investigation of a fiery car wreck that killed two people at a border checkpoint in Niagara Falls after finding no evidence that it was a terror attack, easing a period of high tensions as Americans headed into the Thanksgiving holiday.

The FBI's decision late Wednesday came several hours after the vehicle raced through an intersection, hit a median and was launched through the air before slamming into a line of booths and exploding at the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls. Local police are now handling the case as a traffic investigation.

"A search of the scene revealed no explosive materials, and no terrorism nexus was identified," the FBI's Buffalo office said in a statement. "The matter has been turned over to the Niagara Falls Police Department as a traffic investigation."

The investigation has been taken over by the Niagara Falls Police Department's Crash Management Unit, according to a news release from the city's police department, which added "Due to the complexity of the incident, the investigation will take some time to complete."

The two people who died were a husband and wife, according to a person briefed on the investigation who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release information about the people who were killed. New York Gov. Kathy Hochul said the driver was a Western New York resident, but the identities of those in the car have not yet been released.

The crash prompted the closure of the Rainbow Bridge and three other bridges connecting western New York and Ontario, as federal officials swarmed the area, trying to figure out what led to the high-speed wreck. Both U.S. President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau received briefings.

Hours later, officials sought to calm concerns on what is one the busiest travel days of the year.

"Based on what we know at this moment," Hochul, a Democrat, said at a news conference, "there is no sign of terrorist activity in this crash."

Hochul said the car was "basically incinerated" with nothing left but the engine and a scattering of charred debris, describing a video of the crash as "surreal."

"You actually had to look at it and say, was this generated by AI?" she said at a news conference. "Be-

cause it was so surreal to see. How high in the air this vehicle went, and then the crash, and the explosion, and the fire.”

Later Wednesday night, New York Sen. Chuck Schumer said investigators had found “no connection to any terrorist or criminal group. He added that there was no evidence of chemicals or substances used in explosives during investigators’ swabbing of the scene.

About 6,000 vehicles cross the Rainbow Bridge each day, according to the U.S. Federal Highway Administration’s National Bridge Inventory. The short, steel bridge offers scenic views of the falls.

Witness Rickie Wilson, a Niagara Falls tour guide, was by his parked car nearby and turned around when he saw something in the air.

“I first thought it was an airplane. It looked like slow motion,” he said. “I said, ‘My God, it’s a car. It’s a vehicle, and it’s flying through the air.’”

Balloons, bands and Santa: Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade ushers in holiday season in New York

By LISET CRUZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Beloved characters like Snoopy and SpongeBob SquarePants soared through the skies above New York City on Thursday and bands marched along the streets below as the annual Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade ushered in the holiday season.

The parade started on Manhattan’s Upper West Side making its way alongside Central Park in front of big crowds and a national television audience before ending in front of Macy’s flagship store on 34th Street.

Among the big names performing is Cher, who just released her first Christmas album. The Oscar-, Emmy- and Grammy Award-winner has a prime spot — performing just before the arrival of Santa Claus, which marks the end of the parade.

Other celebrities and musical groups taking part include Jon Batiste, Bell Biv DeVoe, Brandy, Jessie James Decker, Pentatonix and Miss America 2023 Grace Stanke. The parade also includes performances from the casts of some Broadway shows.

The parade was briefly disrupted when about a half-dozen protesters in jumpsuits covered in fake blood glued themselves to the street just in front of a float carrying characters from the fast food giant McDonald’s. They carried a banner that said “Free Palestine” and “Genocide then. Genocide now” and were taken into custody.

The parade continued as police worked.

New balloons debuting this year include Leo the lizard, a character from a Netflix film, who is more than 40 feet (12.5 meters) tall, as well as ones that have been there before — like SpongeBob, coming in at 44 feet (13.4 meters).

Some characters, like Snoopy, have been in the parade for many years, but this year’s balloon is a new Beagle Scout Snoopy version — celebrating the 50th anniversary of his first appearance in the Peanuts comics.

The parade isn’t just about what’s going on in the skies, though. At street level, the procession includes more than two dozen floats, interspersed with marching bands from around the country and a number of clown crews among the 8,000 people participating, organizers said.

Thousands lined the streets in coats on a chilly, sunny morning. Children were on the shoulders of their parents, shouting as characters like Bluey and Big Bird from Sesame Street passed by.

Terri Brown, her husband and their children, ages 3, 5 and 8, were groggy after the 30-mile (50-kilometer) drive from Westfield, New Jersey. But their faces lit up as the parade started.

“I’ve always wanted to bring them here since I used to come as a kid,” Brown said. “I’m happy it’s good weather.”

Ross Greenstein drove 10 hours from Michigan to catch the parade with his daughter, who is studying law in New York, as well as his wife and two other children. Before Thursday, he had only seen the parade on TV.

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"I grew up every Thanksgiving, waking up and jumping on the couch and watching the parade," Greenstein said. "We came to see the parade for the first time in my life and it feels very surreal."

This is the 97th time the parade has been held since 1924.

The broadcast is hosted by Savannah Guthrie, Hoda Kotb and Al Roker from "Today" and airs on NBC.

President Joe Biden and his wife Jill called NBC during the parade. The president told Al Roker that people should take a moment to be thankful to live in a country with so much.

"We're the greatest nation in the world. We should focus on that. We should focus on dealing with our problems and stop the rancor," Biden said.

Residents of Kentucky town can return home after crews extinguish derailment fire

LIVINGSTON, Ky. (AP) — A chemical fire at a Kentucky train derailment that caused evacuations has been extinguished and people can return to their homes, rail operator CSX said Thursday.

CSX spokesperson Bryan Tucker said in an email Thursday afternoon that "the fire is completely out." He said that authorities and CSX officials reviewed air monitoring data and decided it was safe to let displaced return home.

The CSX train derailed around 2:30 p.m. Wednesday near Livingston, a remote town with about 200 people in Rockcastle County. Residents were encouraged to evacuate.

Two of the 16 cars that derailed carried molten sulfur, which caught fire after the cars were breached, CSX said in a statement.

It's believed that the fire released the potentially harmful gas sulfur dioxide, but officials have not released results of measurements taken from air monitoring equipment that was being deployed Wednesday night.

The derailment meant some Livingston residents woke up on Thanksgiving in a middle school shelter.

Cindy Bradley had just finished cooking for the big meal Wednesday when an official knocking loudly urged her to leave her small Kentucky home as soon as possible because a train had derailed.

She ended up at Rockcastle County Middle School in Livingston — unsure what was to come next.

"It's just really scary. We don't know how long this is," Bradley told WTVQ-TV on Wednesday night, surrounded by dozens of cots.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency website, sulfur dioxide can cause respiratory problems, depending on the concentration and length of exposure. The gas is commonly produced by burning fossil fuels at power plants and other industrial processes, the EPA says.

Evelyn Gray noticed a problem when her back door was opened by someone telling her to evacuate.

"As soon as he opened the back door to come in the chemical hit me, and I had a real bad asthma attack," Gray told the TV station.

The danger from sulfur dioxide tends to be direct and quick, irritating the lungs and skin, said Neil Donahue, a chemistry professor at Carnegie Mellon University.

"It is just nasty, caustic, and acidic stuff that hurts. It's unpleasant to be in," Donahue said.

Once the fire was put out, the threat from the chemicals was expected to diminish quickly, Donahue said.

CSX is now working to clean up an additional spilled chemical and restore the area.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear declared a state of emergency in the county, assuring crews all the help from the state they need. He asked the public to keep in mind the emergency workers and people forced to spend Thanksgiving away from home.

"Please think about them and pray for a resolution that gets them back in their homes. Thank you to all the first responders spending this day protecting our people," the governor said in a statement Thursday.

CSX promised to pay the costs of anyone asked to evacuate, including a Thanksgiving dinner.

In a political shift to the far right, anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders wins big in Dutch election

By MIKE CORDER and RAF CASERT Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders said Thursday that he is ready to join the next Dutch coalition government after he surged to a huge election victory that marked a stunning lurch to the far right for a nation once famed as a beacon of tolerance.

The result is sending shockwaves through Europe, where extremist nationalist ideology is putting pressure on democracies that now face the possibility of having to deal with the first far-right prime minister of the Netherlands.

"It is going to happen that the PVV is in the next Cabinet," Wilders said, using the Dutch abbreviation for his Party for Freedom.

With nearly all votes counted, Wilders' party was forecast to win 37 seats in the 150-seat lower house of parliament, more than double the 17 the party secured in the last election.

Wilders got a standing ovation, cake and sparkling wine when he met his lawmakers at the parliament building Thursday morning.

"Can you imagine it? 37 seats!" he said to cheers.

Other political parties were holding separate meetings to discuss the election's outcome before what is likely to be an arduous process of forming a new governing coalition begins Friday.

Wilders' election program included calls for a referendum on the Netherlands leaving the European Union, a total halt to accepting asylum-seekers and migrant pushbacks at Dutch borders.

It also advocates the "de-Islamization" of the Netherlands. He says he wants no mosques or Islamic schools in the country, although he has been milder about Islam during this election campaign than in the past.

One of the most prominent Muslim organizations in the Netherlands said it had received emails expressing support since the election result.

"That's reassuring," the Contact Group Muslims and Government said in a statement. "In addition, Mr. Wilders has said that he will become prime minister of all Dutch people, regardless of their religion, sex or color. The Netherlands is a state governed by the rule of law and we trust that it is a tolerant country."

Although known for his harsh rhetoric, Wilders began courting other conservative and centrist parties by saying in a victory speech that whatever policies he pushes will be "within the law and constitution."

His victory appeared based on his campaign to curtail migration — the issue that caused the last governing coalition to quit in July — and to tackle problems including the Netherlands' cost-of-living crisis and housing shortages.

In his victory speech, Wilders said he wants to end what he called the "asylum tsunami," referring to the migration issue that came to dominate his campaign.

"The Dutch will be No. 1 again," Wilders said. "The people must get their nation back."

But to become prime minister of a country known for compromise politics, the politician sometimes called the Dutch Donald Trump must persuade other party leaders to work with him in a coalition government.

That will be tough since mainstream parties have long been reluctant to join forces with him and his party, but the size of his victory strengthens his hand in any negotiations.

Wilders called on other parties to constructively engage in coalition talks. Pieter Omtzigt, a former centrist Christian Democrat who built his own New Social Contract party in three months to take 20 seats, said he would always be open to talks.

"It will be a complicated formation process. It is up to responsible politicians to form a government, one way or another," Omtzigt said, according to Dutch news site Nu.nl.

The party that finished behind Wilders' in the election was an alliance of the center-left Labor Party and Green Left, which was forecast to win 25 seats. But its leader, Frans Timmermans, made clear that Wilders shouldn't count on him as a partner.

The historic victory came one year after the win of Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, whose Brothers of Italy party had roots steeped in nostalgia for fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Meloni has since mellowed

her stance on several issues and has become the acceptable face of the hard right in the EU.

During the final weeks of his campaign, Wilders somewhat softened his stance and vowed that he would be a prime minister for all Dutch people.

The election was called after the fourth and final coalition of Mark Rutte, who resigned in July, failed to agree on measures to rein in migration. He has been in office for 13 years, making him the Netherlands' longest-serving leader, and plans to step down once a new coalition government is formed.

Rutte was replaced as the head of VVD by Dilan Yeşilgöz-Zegerius, a former refugee from Turkey who could have become the country's first female prime minister had her party won the most votes. Instead, it was forecast to lose 10 seats to end up with 24.

She said that the PVV and Omtzigt's party should now take the initiative in talks to form the next coalition. The result is the latest in a series of elections that is altering the European political landscape. From Slovakia and Spain, to Germany and Poland, populist and hard-right parties triumphed in some EU member nations and faltered in others.

In The Hague on Thursday, Dutch voter Barbara Belder said that Wilders' victory "is a very clear sign that the Netherlands wants something different."

OxyContin maker's settlement plan divides victims of opioid crisis. Now it's up to the Supreme Court

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The agreement by the maker of OxyContin to settle thousands of lawsuits over the harm done by opioids could help combat the overdose epidemic that the painkiller helped spark. But that does not mean all the victims are satisfied.

In exchange for giving up ownership of drug manufacturer Purdue Pharma and for contributing up to \$6 billion to fight the crisis, members of the wealthy Sackler family would be exempt from any civil lawsuits. At the same time, they could potentially keep billions of dollars from their profits on OxyContin sales.

The Supreme Court is set to hear arguments Dec. 4 over whether the agreement, part of the resolution of Purdue Pharma's bankruptcy, violates federal law.

The issue for the justices is whether the legal shield that bankruptcy provides can be extended to people such as the Sacklers, who have not declared bankruptcy themselves. The legal question has resulted in conflicting lower court decisions. It also has implications for other major product liability lawsuits settled through the bankruptcy system.

But the agreement, even with billions of dollars set aside for opioid abatement and treatment programs, also poses a moral conundrum that has divided people who lost loved ones or lost years of their own lives to opioids.

Ellen Isaacs' 33-year-old son, Ryan Wroblewski, died in Florida in 2018, about 17 years after he was first prescribed OxyContin for a back injury. When she first heard about a potential settlement that would include some money for people like her, she signed up. But she has changed her mind.

Money might not bring closure, she said. And by allowing the deal, it could lead to more problems.

"Anybody in the future would be able to do the exact same thing that the Sacklers are now able to do," she said in an interview.

Her lawyer, Mike Quinn, put it this way in a court filing: "The Sackler releases are special protection for billionaires."

Lynn Wencus, of Wrentham, Massachusetts, also lost a 33-year-old son, Jeff, to overdose in 2017.

She initially opposed the deal with Purdue Pharma but has come around. Even though she does not expect a payout, she wants the settlement to be finalized in hopes it would help her stop thinking about Purdue Pharma and Sackler family members, whom she blames for the opioid crisis.

"I feel like I can't really move on while this is all hanging out in the court," Wencus said.

Purdue Pharma's aggressive marketing of OxyContin, a powerful prescription painkiller that hit the market in 1996, is often cited as a catalyst of a nationwide opioid epidemic, persuading doctors to prescribe

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painkillers with less regard for addiction dangers.

The company pleaded guilty to misbranding the drug in 2007 and paid more than \$600 million in fines and penalties.

The drug and the Stamford, Connecticut-based company became synonymous with the crisis, even though the majority of pills being prescribed and used were generic drugs. Opioid-related overdose deaths have continued to climb, hitting 80,000 in recent years. That's partly because people with substance abuse disorder found pills harder to get and turned to heroin and, more recently, fentanyl, an even more potent synthetic opioid.

Drug companies, wholesalers and pharmacies have agreed to pay a total of more than \$50 billion to settle lawsuits filed by state, local and Native American tribal governments and others that claimed the companies' marketing, sales and monitoring practices spurred the epidemic. The Purdue Pharma settlement would be among the largest. It's also one of only two so far with provisions for victims of the crisis to be compensated directly, with payouts from a \$750 million pool expected to range from about \$3,500 to \$48,000.

Lawyers for more than 60,000 victims who support the settlement called it "a watershed moment in the opioid crisis," while recognizing that "no amount of money could fully compensate" victims for the damage caused by the misleading marketing of OxyContin.

In the fallout, parts of the Sackler family story has been told in multiple books and documentaries and in fictionalized versions in the streaming series "Dopesick" and "Painkiller."

Museums and universities around the world have removed the family's name from galleries and buildings. Family members have remained mostly out of the public eye, and they have stepped off the board of their company and have not received payouts from it since before the company entered bankruptcy. But in the decade before that, they were paid more than \$10 billion, about half of which family members said went to pay taxes.

Some testified in a 2021 bankruptcy hearing, telling a judge that the family would not contribute to the proposed legal settlement without being shielded from lawsuits.

Two family members appeared by video and one listened by audio to a 2022 court hearing in which more than two dozen people impacted by opioids told their stories publicly. One told them: "You poisoned our lives and had the audacity to blame us for dying."

Purdue Pharma reached the deal with the governments suing it — including with some states that initially rejected the plan.

But the U.S. Bankruptcy Trustee, an arm of the Justice Department responsible for promoting the integrity of the bankruptcy system, has objected to the legal protections for Sackler family members. Attorney General Merrick Garland also has criticized the plan.

The opposition marked an about-face for the Justice Department, which supported the settlement during the presidency of Donald Trump, a Republican. The department and Purdue Pharma forged a plea bargain in a criminal and civil case. The deal included \$8.3 billion in penalties and forfeitures, but the company would pay the federal government only \$225 million so long as it executed the settlement plan.

A federal trial court judge in 2021 ruled the settlement should not be allowed. This year, a federal appeals panel ruled the other way in a unanimous decision in which one judge still expressed major concerns about the deal. The Supreme Court quickly agreed to take the case, at the urging of the administration of President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

Purdue Pharma's is not the first bankruptcy to include this sort of third-party release, even when not everyone in the case agrees to it. It was specifically allowed by Congress in 1994 for asbestos cases.

They have been used elsewhere, too, including in settlements of sexual abuse claims against the Boy Scouts of America, where groups like regional Boy Scout councils and churches that sponsor troops helped pay, and against Catholic dioceses, where parishes and schools contributed cash.

Proponents of Purdue Pharma's settlement plan often assert that federal law does not prohibit third-party releases and that they can be necessary to create a settlement that parties will agree to.

"Third-party releases are a recurring feature of bankruptcy practice," lawyers for one branch of the Sackler family said in a court filing, "and not because anyone is trying to do the released third parties a favor."

Daniel Noboa is sworn in as Ecuador's president, inheriting the leadership of a country on edge

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Daniel Noboa, an inexperienced politician and heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, was sworn in Thursday as Ecuador's president, a role that citizens are demanding he uses to restore the public safety that drug cartels and other criminal organizations robbed them of at the decade's start.

Noboa's term will run only through May 2025, which is what remains of former President Guillermo Lasso's tenure. Lasso cut his term short when he dissolved the National Assembly in May as lawmakers pursued impeachment proceedings against him.

The head of the country's newly elected legislature, Henry Kronfle, placed the presidential sash on Noboa during a ceremony in Quito, the capital.

In a brief speech, Noboa said his government's main objective is to "reduce violence and make progress a habit." He acknowledged that it is "a hard and difficult task" to tackle in the short term he will serve.

"I am not anti anything, I am pro everything," he said. "Let us join forces... let us leave the old political schemes and concentrate on solving the big problems that afflict Ecuador."

Under Lasso's watch, violent deaths in Ecuador soared, reaching a record 4,600 in 2022, which was double the number from the year before. Killings, kidnappings, robberies and other criminal activities became part of Ecuadorians' everyday life.

The assassination of presidential candidate and anti-corruption crusader Fernando Villavicencio as he left a campaign rally in August underscored the country's fragile security situation.

Noboa's only experience in government was as a member of National Assembly that Lasso dissolved. He is inheriting a weakened economy and serious fiscal challenges as well as the leadership of a country mired by violent crime,

"The economy and security are indivisible issues; it is an important front on which President Noboa must work," Andrés Briones, an analyst and professor at Casa Grande University in Guayaquil, Ecuador, said. Noboa's government will have to "undertake tax reforms to encourage growth and the revitalization of the economy."

But any actions he wishes to take to address Ecuador's crucial issues will first require him to negotiate with the National Assembly, where his party lacks enough seats to govern on its own.

The spike in violence is tied to the trafficking of cocaine produced in neighboring Colombia and Peru. Mexican, Colombian and Balkan cartels have set down roots in Ecuador and operate with assistance from local criminal gangs.

Noboa has made a range of proposals to improve security, from using barges to house inmates to getting police more gear. While those ideas helped him get elected on Oct. 15, he now faces the challenge of leading a population frightened to the point of opting to stay home as much as possible.

"We have been kidnapped by organized crime," Alejandro Zabala, a professor at the University of Las Américas, said.

But Zabala thinks the heavy-handed policies imposed by Lasso were "an absolute failure" and suggested the government must clean up the ranks of law enforcement, invest in equipment for police and join regional and international efforts against organized crime as Ecuador "cannot win this war alone."

Like Lasso, a conservative former banker, Noboa's wealth puts him at the top of Ecuador's elite. His father, Álvaro Noboa, is among Ecuador's richest people thanks to a conglomerate that started in the growing and shipping of bananas and now includes more than 128 companies in dozens of countries.

The elder Noboa unsuccessfully ran for president five times.

The younger Noboa opened an event organizing company when he was 18 and then joined his father's Noboa Corp., where he held management positions in the shipping, logistics and commercial areas. His political career began in 2021, when he got a seat in the National Assembly and chaired its Economic

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Development Commission.

Verónica Abad, a politician and businesswoman, was sworn in as vice president during Thursday's ceremony.

The only foreign president to attend the ceremony was Colombia's Gustavo Petro. The vice presidents of Brazil and Honduras were also present.

Ecuador's fiscal mess is in part the result of declining revenues from tax collection and oil exports, on which the country largely depends.

Data from the Ministry of Finance show state coffers received \$991 million from oil between January and July. That's less than half of the \$2.3 billion the state received during the same period last year. Meanwhile, tax collections this year fell by \$137 million.

The country's fiscal deficit is expected to be around \$5 billion by the end of the year, or more than 5% of its gross domestic product.

Former Minister of Economy and Finance Fausto Ortíz said Lasso had good fiscal management of the economy, adhering to instructions of the International Monetary Fund, with cuts in public spending and state investment and a sustained reduction in the fiscal deficit.

But Ortíz argued that "the fiscal part is not everything in the management of a country" and the strategy has brought unintended consequences: No economic growth and no employment growth.

"The result is not favorable," he said.

Trump tells Argentina's President-elect Javier Milei he plans to visit Buenos Aires

By DANIEL POLITI Associated Press

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) — Former President Donald Trump has told Argentina's President-elect Javier Milei that he plans to travel to the South American country so the two can meet, Milei's office said Thursday.

The office did not give a date for when Trump intends to be in Buenos Aires. The inauguration of Milei, a right-wing populist who has expressed admiration for Trump, is scheduled for Dec. 10.

"The president-elect received a call last night from the former president of the United States, Donald Trump, who congratulated him and pointed out his triumph by a wide margin in last Sunday's election had a great impact on a global scale," a news release from Milei's office said.

A local journalist who was first to report the news, Luis Majul, wrote on X early Thursday that the lawmaker son of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, Eduardo Bolsonaro, was the one who "facilitated" the contact between Milei and the GOP front-runner. "That's right," Milei posted in response.

Trump celebrated Milei's victory with a social media post of his own on Tuesday.

"I am very proud of you. You will turn your country around and truly make Argentina great again," Trump said in a video published on social media Tuesday.

Milei has often been compared to Trump, whom he praised in an interview with former Fox News host Tucker Carlson earlier this year. During the interview, Milei called on Trump to "continue with his fight against socialism, because he's one of the few who fully understood that the battle is against socialism, that the battle is against the statist."

His conversation with Trump on Wednesday took place a few hours after Milei spoke with President Joe Biden.

The White House said Biden congratulated Milei and spoke of "the strong relationship between the United States and Argentina on economic issues, on regional and multilateral cooperation, and on shared priorities, including advocating for the protection of human rights, addressing food insecurity and investing in clean energy."

Europe's far-right populists buoyed by Wilders' win in Netherlands, hoping the best is yet to come

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — If ever the hard right in Europe needed a set of jumper cables to rev up their electoral engine again in the wake of last month's major setback in Poland, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands provided it.

Congratulations rolled in Thursday from all sides where the far right holds some sway on the continent after anti-Islam firebrand Wilders scored an election victory as unexpected as it was massive. His party more than doubled in size in parliament to tower over mainstream parties that long specialized in marginalizing him.

Suddenly on Thursday, there was hope in the air again for nationalist conservative populists, especially with an European Parliament election coming up in June.

"All of Europe wants a political turnaround!" said Alice Weidel, the leader of German far-right party AfD, or Alternative for Germany, much more in hope than certainty as she congratulated Wilders on his win.

It will be tough to match Wilders' turnaround though. He more than doubled the seats of his Party for Freedom in the 150-seat parliament from 17 to 37. And while he was still trailing three parties in the polls with a week to go, he roared past them all by Thursday, leaving a green-left coalition second with 25 seats.

Buoyed by Wilders' win, a tectonic change in the Dutch political landscape, the far right now hopes to push ahead on a continent where Russia's war in Ukraine, chaotic and deadly migration on its borders and spreading poverty because of inflation has turned any election into a tough test where the outcome is never a given.

Last month, Alternative for Germany extended its reach from its dominant base in the country's formerly communist east by making two strong showings in the west, and recent polls have put the party in second place nationwide with support of around 20% — about double its popularity during the 2021 federal election.

Earlier, Slovakia had already turned populist with Robert Fico's Smer party winning a general election and setting up a coalition government with an ultranationalist party.

Hopes were high that the vote in Poland in late October would cement that rise, but the extreme conservative Law and Justice party lost control of the Polish government to a moderate coalition. Now, Wilders has put the populist far-right movement back on track.

"The winds of change have arrived!," crowed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, whose many rule of law issues with the European Union have turned him into the bane of proponents of Western liberal democracy.

Like Wilders, Marine Le Pen in France has been dreaming of grasping power for more than a decade and now sees that perseverance can pay off. And she is happy she has another powerful ally with a similar loathing of the EU. The 27-nation bloc is on the radar of just about every populist far-right politician, derided as a bullying behemoth that smothers national identities yet offers free entry to people who undermine what they see as traditional Christian values.

"It shows that more and more countries within the European Union contest the way it works ... and hope that we can again master a migration that is considered by many Europeans as both massive and anarchic," Le Pen said Thursday on France-Inter radio.

And as a founding member of the EU, and a vital trading link between many of its most powerful nations, the Netherlands might have issues with cutting the umbilical cord to the bloc.

Wilders calls for a "Nexit" referendum — a Dutch version of Brexit which saw the United Kingdom leave the EU. By nature, Dutch politics rely on coalitions between several parties and no other suitable party has followed Wilders on that.

"He can never rule on his own, and I cannot imagine any kind of coalition majority that would choose a confrontation with Europe," said professor Hendrik Vos of Ghent University, an expert on EU politics. "The Netherlands just has too much at stake in the EU market. It is unthinkable. And you have already seen

him tone down some of his rhetoric," Vos said.

He also did so with his strident tone on Islam and warning that he would close off the national borders to migration. Now, he has already promised that if picked as prime minister, he would be there for all Dutch, including Muslims.

Words, though, have no expiry date — and they can haunt you.

When Italy's nationalist conservative League leader Matteo Salvini congratulated Wilders for his "extraordinary electoral victory" that he said showed that "a new Europe is possible," Italian opposition center-left lawmakers quickly showed he might not be the friend of Italy that Salvini thought.

They posted a screenshot of Salvini's tweet alongside a 2020 photo of Wilders holding a sign saying "Not a cent to Italy," in reference to his opposition to any EU funding for the country so that it could overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

Portraits of those held hostage after Hamas attack on Israel

By The Associated Press undefined

A temporary cease-fire deal that would facilitate the release of dozens of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza offers a glimmer of hope to families and friends of those who have been held captive since their abduction from southern Israel by militants on Oct. 7.

In all, roughly 240 people were taken to Gaza by militants in Hamas' deadly rampage. Israel and Hamas agreed to a four-day halt that would also see the release of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Under the deal announced by Qatar on Wednesday, 50 hostages would be released in exchange for what Hamas said would be 150 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Those released by both sides would be women and minors. Israel said the truce would be extended by a day for every 10 additional hostages released.

While several families will be thrilled to have their loved ones back, if the deal goes through, a significant number of hostages will likely remain in captivity. The plight of the families has gripped Israelis and they have widespread support.

Here are stories of some of the hostages.

Emily Hand

Emily Tony Korenberg Hand celebrated her eighth birthday last year romping with friends and family among the jugglers, acrobats and stilt walkers for her circus-themed party at Kibbutz Be'eri, not far from the Gaza Strip.

There was no party when she turned 9 on Nov. 17. Emily is believed to be somewhere in Gaza, taken by militants who swarmed her kibbutz.

"She won't even know it's her birthday. She won't know what day it is," her tearful father, Thomas Hand, 63, said via Zoom. "Can you imagine the fear?"

Thomas Hand originally was told by Be'eri leaders that Emily was among the dead after she had spent the night at a friend's house on the kibbutz. His grief was tinged with comfort.

"I was sort of relieved because I'd rather that than have her taken hostage," he recalled thinking.

Then, on Oct. 31, Hand's world turned upside down once again.

That's when the Israeli military informed him Emily's body had not been recovered, nor was her DNA found among the blood and many dead at Be'eri.

"I had to shift my whole brain and digest this new information. And when they told me, I just went, 'No, no, no no,'" he said, his voice cracking.

Emily's half-sister Natalie, 26, told The Times of Israel: "I want to tell you that we are doing everything to get you home. We know you are being held hostage. We love you so much and miss you."

Thomas Hand was in New York to unveil a billboard of Emily in Times Square. It's the first of hundreds to go up around the United States with images of the hostages as some protesters continue to tear down "kidnapped" posters. A billboard, Hand said, can't be ripped apart.

"Can you imagine what that poor little child is going through every single day, terrified for her life?" he

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said.

Itay Chen

At 5-foot-9, Itay Chen is short by basketball standards. But he earned his minutes on the court by being fearless and taking the big outside shot.

It's a character trait Ruby Chen said his son needs in captivity. Itay, a 19-year-old Israeli-American, was taken captive while on military duty.

"He needed to be spunky. He used it against larger kids," Ruby said of his son's time on the court. "He never backed down. He always had the fight in him to do what he can."

Maybe it came from what Ruby called the "New York tough" attitude he sought to instill in his son. Ruby, who grew up in New York, nurtured grit in Itay with frequent trips to the city, visiting Coney Island and Madison Square Garden. Dad was a Knicks fan. Itay idolized Kobe Bryant and the Lakers.

He's still just a kid, Ruby said. He wasn't a commando attacking enemy positions the day of the Hamas attack. Just a teenager doing his mandatory military service. Not that long ago, he was a Boy Scout.

Itay wasn't even supposed to be on duty when the onslaught began. He had switched weekends with another soldier so he could attend his brother's Bar Mitzvah, the ceremony marking a Jewish boy's passage into manhood.

The family insisted on going through with the service a week after the attack. It was cathartic and spiritual. There are plans for another celebration when Itay returns, Ruby said.

"You cannot stand still because if you stand still in hell you get burned," Ruby said. "So you need to keep on walking."

— Danica Kirka

Liat Beinin and Aviv Atzili

The bond between Liat Beinin and Aviv Atzili is clear in their photographs.

There's a tender image of the couple posing under a tree during a recent trip to Oregon in a space both beautiful and green. There is the selfie during the same trip, Aviv's arm draped across Liat's shoulders as they both grin at the camera. And one in the shadow of New York, perfect for the pair with wanderlust.

Liat is an Israeli-American teacher who volunteered to give tours at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust remembrance center, certain that she could reach visitors with her positive attitude and flawless English. Aviv is an artist and mechanic who kept the farm machinery at Kibbutz Nir Oz in tip-top shape and used old equipment as a canvas for his paintings.

Both were taken hostage when Hamas militants rampaged through the kibbutz, a horror that is incomprehensible for friends and family.

"They're really peace-loving, compassionate people," said Boaz Atzili, Aviv's cousin. "A really good example of that is that they adopted this dog who is like a special (needs) dog with three legs, and they gave her like a really warm and nice family."

Militants killed the dog during the attack.

Liat and Aviv, both 49, have been partners ever since they met as youth counselors. After completing their military service, they travelled for three years, visiting India and Australia, where they married. Returning to Israel, they settled at Kibbutz Nir Oz, where they raised three children.

Liat's father, Yehuda, said he is trying to remain calm, visiting world leaders and talking to the media so he can keep the names of his daughter and son-in-law in the public eye.

He also hopes Liat may hear his words.

"The ultimate greeting that I can pass on to my daughter, are Hebrew words from the Bible," he said. "What Moses said to Joshua is to be strong and courageous ... and if Liat hears this, she knows that this is my ultimate blessing."

— Danica Kirka

Luis Har

Luis Har isn't just a grandfather to his own 10 grandchildren, said his daughter, Rinat Sheleg. In their kibbutz, "he's like the grandfather of all."

Har, 70, had been visiting another kibbutz near the Gaza border with his longtime partner, Clara Marman,

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for a child's birthday party. The couple were taken hostage in the attack, along with Marman's brother Fernando Marman, her sister Gabriela Leimberg, and her niece Mia Leimberg, 17.

Sheleg said she and her two young children were visiting friends in another part of Israel when her father texted her around 10 a.m., saying there were attackers. An hour later, he texted that the militants had come into the house. That was the last she heard from him.

Sheleg and her sister made a short visit to the United States recently to talk about their father and the others taken hostage.

Her children, 5 and 2, have been asking about him, she said. "My dad all the time takes them from kindergarten. Every day we eat dinner together, we are all the time together. For them it's like their father more than grandfather."

Har spent his childhood in Argentina, then came to Israel for military service and never left, Sheleg said. He's an avid dancer and a committed cook, she said. "All our life, he makes us the best pasta and pizza and empanadas and all the great food."

She said his return will bring a huge celebration. But can't even begin to imagine what he's gone through — or that "he will not come back to the same person that he was before."

Consumed with worry, she hasn't been sleeping well.

"He's amazing person, he's our best friend, he's not only our dad."

— Deepti Hajela

Alex Dancyg

Alex Dancyg left Poland at age 9, sailing by ship to a new life in Israel in 1957. But Poland never left him. With a love of Polish poetry and culture, the son of Holocaust survivors returned often in past decades in a mission to promote Polish-Israeli dialogue.

The retired 75-year-old Yad Vashem historian was abducted from the Nir Oz kibbutz, where he carried out academic work and contributed to the communal sowing and harvesting of potatoes, peanuts and other produce, his son Yuval Danzig said. He is the only known Polish-Israeli among the hostages still held, according to the Israeli Embassy in Warsaw.

In Warsaw, his Polish friends are fearful over the fate of a man whom they describe as erudite, open-minded and warm.

A demonstration was held in October at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw, calling for the hostages to be freed. Balloons in Israel's blue and white colors were released into the air. His son, standing next to Israel's ambassador, held a photo of his father.

His son described Alex as an Israeli Zionist who was proud of his Polish heritage, reciting Polish poetry to the point of annoying his family and dressing Yuval in the soccer shirt of the Polish national team as a boy.

"All his life he felt that Poland was his second love after Israel," said Danzig, who spells the family name differently from his father. "He was 100% Israeli and 100% Polish."

Poland has a complicated relationship with Jewish history. For centuries it was home to Europe's largest Jewish community due to the greater tolerance it offered Jews, compared to other places in Europe. The Jewish community numbered 3.3 million on the eve of World War II.

Most were murdered after Nazi Germany occupied Poland and established ghettos and death camps in the country. Dancyg's parents survived in Ukraine using falsified Ukrainian documents, but almost everyone else in the family was killed.

Some Poles risked their lives to help Jews but others were participants in persecution. The resulting fraught relationship between the two peoples has led to diplomatic crises between Poland and Israel.

Dancyg worked to encourage his fellow Israelis to see Poland in all its complexity. He trained Israeli guides who lead Israeli youth to sites like Auschwitz. He also worked with the POLIN museum, which tells the story of the centuries of Jewish life in Polish lands.

— Vanessa Gera

Gong Sae Lao

Gong Sae Lao of Thailand wasn't worried when he traveled a year ago to Israel to work as a farmhand.

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Gong, 26, knew vaguely about the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. He knew of occasional rocket attacks, of skirmishes. But earning a living was hard at home in northern Thailand, where Gong delivered fruits and vegetables to market. Moreover, his family was in debt, and Gong — with his father long dead and a brother in prison — was the main provider.

So he headed for Israel to earn wages that would give him and his loved ones a brighter future. But when Hamas militants slipped into southern Israel, Kibbutz Be'eri, where Gong worked, was one of the targets.

Wanwarin Yensuk, who works as the Thailand program manager for the U.S.-based Global Fund for Children, has helped Gong's wife communicate with non-Thai speaking officials.

According to Wanwarin, Gong was on Facebook Live talking to other Thai migrant workers when the attack began. Loud shooting was heard in the background. Gong's wife was listening in. She urgently called her husband. That was the last time she heard his voice.

Three Thai workers in Gong's tight-knit group also were taken hostage, Wanwarin said. Their living quarters were burned to the ground.

Gong's family is from the village of Mae Fah Luang, in northern Chiang Rai province. They are members of the Hmong minority. A local official contacted his mother about collecting a DNA sample, presumably to help identify him.

— Pamela Sampson

Oded Lifshitz

Oded Lifshitz has spent his life fighting for Arab rights, but that didn't prevent him from being abducted.

Throughout a long career in journalism, he campaigned for the recognition of Palestinian rights and peace between Arabs and Jews. In retirement, the 83-year-old drove to the Erez border crossing on the northern edge of the Gaza Strip once a week to ferry Palestinians to medical appointments in Israel as part of a group called On the Way to Recovery.

"My father spent his life fighting for peace," his daughter Sharone Lifschitz, who spells her surname slightly differently, told reporters in London. "We are all his children. When we ask for peace, we ask to see the human within each of us."

Oded and his wife, Yocheved, helped found Kibbutz Nir Oz, where they were abducted. Hamas militants killed dozens of residents there. Yocheved Lifshitz and another elderly woman, Nurit Cooper, were freed Oct. 23. Oded Lifshitz remains in captivity.

Oded was most proud of his work on behalf of the traditionally nomadic Bedouin people of the Negev Desert, Sharone Lifschitz said, describing a case that went to Israel's High Court and resulted in the return of some of their land.

Sharone Lifschitz believes her father still supports reconciliation — just like her mother, who shook her captor's hand and said "shalom," the Hebrew word for peace, as she was released.

"We should celebrate, you know, the people that are working for peace — not the people just that are working for war," Sharone Lifschitz said. "I think that was my father's life story."

— Danica Kirka

Joshua Mollel

Tanzanian agriculture intern Joshua Loitu Mollel, 21, was working on a cow farm and living in Kibbutz Nahal Oz not far from the Gaza Strip when he was abducted.

Loitu Sindoeni Mollel last spoke to his son, the eldest of his five children, on Oct. 5.

"I told him, you're in a foreign country, you have to have good behavior so you can succeed," the father said by phone from his home in Tanzania's Manyara region. "Now, my other children ask me every day, 'Where is my brother? Where is my brother?' But I have no answers."

Joshua, kind and outgoing, had just graduated from an agriculture college. He had dreams connected to the land. "He wants to be a big farmer," his father said.

Thirty-six agriculture interns from Tanzania were living near Gaza at the time of the attack, according to the human rights organization Hotline for Refugees and Migrants. The rest have been accounted for.

— Leanne Italie

Bibas family

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Ofri Bibas couldn't bring herself to tell her brother, Yarden, she loved him when his home came under attack, fearing that might signal some kind of irreversible finality, she said.

Yarden Bibas, his wife, Shiri, and their sons, 4-year-old Ariel and 9-month-old Kfir, were snatched from their home in the Nir-Oz Kibbutz.

Her brother initially believed the volley of rocket fire was "just another bombing like we're used to," said Ofri Bibas, who lives elsewhere in Israel.

But he soon realized it was "something much bigger and much worse," she said, speaking at a rally in support of Israel in Larnaca, Cyprus, that she and other relatives of the hostages attended to raise awareness of the plight of their loved ones.

Ofri Bibas said she communicated with her brother in a flurry of texts as Hamas gunmen roamed outside his home. She said her brother and his wife did their best to keep their sons quiet.

"Try to imagine keeping a 9-month-old and a 4-year-old kid quiet so the terrorists won't come in," she said.

Yarden Bibas told his sister he had a gun in the house, but couldn't use it to defend his family against so many gunmen armed with automatic rifles.

Then her brother said he loved her. "I just said, 'Shut up it's going to be okay, shut up. Just be quiet and follow the security and everything will be all right.'"

Later that night, Yarden sent a final text that the gunmen had entered the family's home.

Ofri Bibas said she and her family learned that Shiri and the boys were taken by Hamas through a video released by the Islamic militants on social media. Later, Hamas released an image showing her wounded brother held by his throat by a militant holding a hammer in his other hand.

Ofri Bibas said every time she hears children playing, she thinks of her little nephew, Kfir, hungry and afraid.

"They must be terrified. We just ask everyone to help us bring them back home," she said.

— Menelaos Hadjicostis

Omer Neutra

A small forest of candles melted into the chocolate icing of a birthday cake in New York's Long Island, but the guest of honor wasn't there.

Omer Neutra, an Israeli soldier, turned 22 seven days after Hamas' attack. Israeli officials told his parents that militants took Neutra and his unit hostage, Orna and Ronen Neutra said in a telephone interview. They were told he was seen on video footage released by Hamas.

At their home in the U.S. on Oct. 14, the family took a break from doing what they can to secure Omer's release by celebrating his birthday. They did not blow out the candle flames, because, they said, Omer wasn't there to do so.

"Omer is tough," said his dad, Ronen. "We feel that he is well."

Omer Neutra was born in Manhattan a month after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the son of Israeli-born parents. A dual citizen, he attended a conservative Jewish school and "knew all of the statistics of the New York Knicks," Ronen said.

He lists Omer's leadership positions as captain of the basketball, soccer and volleyball teams at the Schechter School of Long Island, as well as a regional president of United Synagogue Youth. Omer, Ronen said, was offered admission to the State University of New York at Binghamton — but instead deferred, took a gap year and then moved to Israel to join the army.

The Neutras last spoke to their son on Oct. 6, the night before the incursion, as he patrolled the Gaza border. Omer was looking forward to Shabbat, which on that weekend was also the start of a weeklong celebration of the harvest season in Israel.

"He was tired — motivated but tired — after a few weeks of lots of action on the border," Ronen said. "He was hoping for a peaceful weekend to relax a little bit."

— Laurie Kellman

Haran family

For days after the Hamas attack, Shaked Haran sought any clues she could about the fate of her missing parents, sister, little niece and nephew, two aunts, an uncle, a cousin — 10 family members in all,

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spanning three generations.

There were strong signs that at least some had been taken hostage. Her parents' house at Kibbutz Be'eri was burned but the shelter was intact and there were no bodies found in it. Phone locations were tracked to Gaza. Haran's brother-in-law had been seen being put in a Hamas car. And after a friend called the father's phone more than 100 times, someone finally answered in Arabic and then referred in Hebrew to a hostage situation.

If captivity was a terrible outcome, the alternative would be worse.

Then Haran, a 34-year-old attorney who grew up on the kibbutz but now lives in Beersheba, got the devastating news that the body of her father, Avshalom Haran, had been identified — he'd died in the violence at Be'eri. The news came shortly after her uncle, Eviatar Kipnis, had also been confirmed dead.

Now, Haran can only pray her other relatives are alive — and tell the world their stories. They include her mother, Shoshan, a longtime social activist who founded the nonprofit Fair Planet, which works to fight food insecurity in the developing world by helping farmers.

"She's really dedicated her time to this, trying to get as many people out of the poverty cycle as possible," Haran said, adding that her family had been committed to peace, with many active in peace organizations, and raised her "to think about the person on the other side of the situation."

Also missing: Haran's sister, Adi, a psychologist; her husband, Tal, and their children Naveh, 8, "a bright, open-hearted boy that makes friends in an instant," and Yahel, 3, "creative and full of life." Also believed abducted are Haran's aunt Sharon, her 12-year-old daughter, Noam, and another aunt Lilach Kipnis.

Asked if she has a message on behalf of her family, Haran preferred to speak about all the hostages and victims.

"I love my family, but they're one small story in this huge catastrophe," Haran said. "They'd want the message to be that they're part of the family of the kibbutz — and the family of Israel."

— Jocelyn Noveck

Yarden Roman

"It's a pity that we did not bring water with us," 3-year-old Geffen told her father, Alon Gat, as they hid in brush from Hamas militants for 18 hours on the morning of Oct. 7.

The two, along with Alon's wife and Geffen's mother, Yarden Roman, had been dragged into a car at Kibbutz Be'eri when Hamas attackers showed up. The family made a run for it under fire, Yarden's brother, Gili, said during a recent visit to New York in support of the hostages.

Alon later emerged with their daughter from a small forest when he thought it was safe. The two made it back to Be'eri, where Israeli soldiers had arrived. Alon last saw of his wife hiding behind a tree as he ran with their child, Gili Roman said via Zoom.

The family believes Yarden deliberately lagged behind to give her family a better chance to get away.

Yarden's sister-in-law is also missing and her mother-in-law was murdered at the kibbutz, Gili said.

To the 36-year-old Yarden, family is everything, her brother said. She is also dedicated to her work as a physical therapist specializing in elder care.

"She is very timid and mostly introvert. She's open and fun and communicative, mostly with our own small circle of family and friends," Gili said.

Yarden is also an avid rock climber. "She did a lot of hikes around the world," Gili said. "When we grew up, she was the tomboy."

— Leanne Italie

Or and Eynav Levy

Two-year-old Almog Levy has been asking for his mom and dad, and no one knows what to tell him.

His parents, Or and Eynav Levy, did everything together. They kept a tent in their car for spontaneous road trips, and they recently took a family trip to Thailand. They also loved music festivals, and drove to the Tribe of Nova festival in the Israeli desert.

They arrived minutes before Hamas militants carried out their massacre. Eynav Elkayam Levy, 32, was confirmed dead. Or, 33, is missing.

"How can you tell a 2-year-old boy he won't see his mother anymore?" asked Or's older brother, Michael

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Levy. The family is stuck between heartbreak and hope, and they pray that Or makes it home alive.

Photos from happier times show the couple beaming at the beach and cafes.

"Or is always smiling, always happy, not just in the pictures," said Michael Levy, 40, who thinks of his brother as a child genius who would break things so he could fix them. Or taught himself computer programming and is part of a successful startup, and he and Eynav dreamed of having a bigger family.

A patchwork of text messages captures the couple's chaotic final minutes together. Eynav texted her mother, who was babysitting Almog, shortly after daybreak to say they'd arrived at the festival site.

Soon after, Or texted his mother to say they were driving back home. It was 6:51 a.m. and sirens were sounding as Hamas rockets flew over the desert party.

Or's mother texted back: "Watch out and call me when you can." He called at 7:39 a.m. to say they were hiding in a bomb shelter. She asked how they were. "Mom, you don't want to know," he replied, before phone service cut off.

Several days later, the Israeli army informed the family that Eynav's body was found inside the shelter, and that Or had been kidnapped and taken hostage. The family has no other details.

Almog's grandparents are taking turns watching the boy, Michael said. They are trying to stay positive, for Almog's sake. "He is calling out for his mom and dad all the time."

— Jocelyn Gecker

Sagui Dekel-Chen

Sagui Dekel-Chen is a builder of things. He's as gifted with his hands as he is at managing community development projects, his father says.

Early on the morning of Oct. 7, Sagui was tinkering with an engine in the machine shop at Nir Oz, when he saw intruders on the grounds and sounded the alarm. After running home, he rigged the door of a safe room so it couldn't be opened from the outside, kissed his pregnant wife and told her to lock herself and their two daughters inside.

Then the 35-year-old father borrowed a gun and tried to protect his community. He hasn't been seen since. His family believes that the Israeli-American, like several members of the kibbutz, was abducted.

"This is a guy who has so much to give," said his father, Jonathan Dekel-Chen. "He's already proven it. Ironically not just to Israelis and his family, his children, but to all of our neighbors."

Sagui Dekel-Chen is a project manager for the U.K. branch of the Jewish National Fund, organizing the construction of schools and youth centers in the underdeveloped Negev Desert. That included collaborating with both Jewish and Muslim nonprofits that worked in Arab communities near the kibbutz.

"Every day was something different. Every day he was helping other people make their nonprofit goals come alive," his father said.

The work was an avenue for Sagui Dekel-Chen's "extraordinary creativity" as he advised nonprofits, launched his own projects and built coalitions to get things done, his father said.

"It is a crime that Hamas has made it so that Palestinian people will never be able, I fear, to benefit themselves from my son and people like him because their brains have been poisoned," his father added.

— Danica Kirka

Romi Gonen

Meirav Leshem Gonen says she feels like she failed to do her job as a mother to protect her 23-year-old daughter, Romi Gonen, who vanished on the day Hamas unleashed its onslaught.

Speaking in Cyprus at a support rally for Israel, Gonen fought back tears as she recounted her daughter's frantic call from an outdoor music festival and her description of missiles falling followed by volleys of automatic gunfire.

"We assumed, OK, a few terrorists, the army will come and everything will be finished in a few minutes," Gonen said. "But the shooting kept on and on, and we are on the phone hearing the shootings, and Romi is terrified."

Gonen and her eldest daughter spent nearly five hours speaking to Romi, who told them that roads clogged with abandoned cars made escape impossible and that she would seek shelter in some bushes.

"She's afraid and she has to hide from bush to bush so the terrorists will not find her. Just imagine where

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she was, what she felt," Gonen said.

A friend who rescued a few other revelers went back in search of Romi and her friends.

But then, the call came that changed everything. "Mommy I was shot, the car was shot, everybody was shot. ... I am wounded and bleeding. Mommy, I think I'm going to die," the mother recounted her daughter saying.

Gonen told Romi that she wasn't going to die, to stop crying, start breathing and to treat her wounded friends.

"And they knew I was lying because I didn't have anything, anything I could do to help her," Gonen said.

"If I cannot help her, I will tell her how much I love her. She's my kid. I wanted her to remember my words, and then told her how much I love her and how much she's loved, and what we will do when she comes back home."

Romi's last word during the call was "Mommy," as approaching gunfire and the men's shouts drowned out everything.

Then the phone shut off.

— Menelaos Hadjicostis

Judith Weinstein and Gad Haggai

Judith Weinstein and her husband, Gad Haggai, were on their morning walk when gunfire erupted and missiles streaked across the sky. Taking cover in a field, they could hear a recorded voice from an alert system for their kibbutz in southern Israel.

"What did she say?" Weinstein, 70, asked in Hebrew as she captured the scene on video.

"Red alert," her 72-year-old husband said.

Weinstein shared the 40-second video clip in a group chat when Hamas attacked Kibbutz Nir Oz. That was their last contact with their family.

The family used the video to pinpoint the couple's last known location and shared it with the Israeli army, but a search came up empty.

A daughter, Iris Weinstein Haggai, has been relentlessly looking for answers from her home in Singapore. The family heard ominous news from a paramedic, who said Weinstein had called for medical help.

"She said they were shot by terrorists on a motorcycle and that my dad was wounded really bad," said Weinstein Haggai, 38. "Paramedics tried to send her an ambulance. The ambulance got hit by a rocket."

The paramedic lost contact with Weinstein, leaving her family grappling with worst-case scenarios.

Haggai is a retired chef and jazz musician. Weinstein, a New York native, is a retired teacher. Both are pacifists who raised their children at the kibbutz, where everybody knows their neighbors.

— Michael Kunzelman

Yaffa Adar

Yaffa Adar loved reading, writing and keeping connected. Even at 85 she often sent her family messages and GIFs on WhatsApp. She was active on Facebook, her granddaughter recalled.

Keeping in close touch online became especially important in recent years as she found it harder to walk beyond her home in Nir Oz. But she kept her mind busy and knew what she wanted, her granddaughter said.

"She loved reading," Adva Adar recalled. "So we were like, 'We're going to get you a Kindle.'" What did her grandmother say? "No, I like the smell of the paper in books."

When no one could find Yaffa Adar after the attack, her family worried. That concern turned to horror when video surfaced showing her being driven in a golf cart in Gaza, wrapped in a pink flowered blanket.

Some people speculated that Yaffa Adar's unflinching demeanor in the video perhaps meant she didn't understand what was happening.

Not her family, which includes three children, eight grandchildren and seven great-grandkids.

"She absolutely knew what was going on around her. She wasn't going to panic," her granddaughter said.

What's frightening now is that her grandmother didn't have her medication for blood pressure and chronic pain.

"She was really the glue of our family. She loved her life," Adva Adar recalls. "She liked good food and

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she liked good wine. She was very young-minded.”

— Laurie Kellman

Roni Eshel

Roni Eshel, a 19-year-old Israel Defense Forces soldier, was stationed at a military base near the Gaza border when Hamas attacked. Although she didn't answer her phone when her mother called to check on her that morning, she later texted to say that she was busy but OK.

“I love you so much,” Eshel told her mother, Sharon, about three hours after the attack started.

Her parents haven't heard from her since, and Eshel's family is desperate to know happened. Her father, Eyal Eshel, describes the wait for news as “hell.”

“I don't know what to do. I don't know what to think, actually. Where is she? What is she eating? If it's cold for her? If it's hot? I don't know nothing,” Eyal Eshel said.

Her father says the IDF has told them she is considered missing; he believes she has been kidnapped.

“Otherwise, where is she?” he asked.

Roni grew up in a small village north of Tel Aviv. She reported for military service two weeks after finishing school. She was three months into her second year of mandatory military service.

“It's part of our life here in Israel,” her father said.

She was in a communications unit at a base near Nahal Oz. She had returned to the base from a brief vacation three days before the attack.

Roni was proud to be a third generation of her family to join the Israeli military. Her father, uncle and grandfather also served.

“She was very happy to serve the country,” her father said.

Her father said she has planned to travel and enroll in a university after completing her two years of service. But he can't think about her future while she's missing. Eyal Eshel says he isn't sleeping, eating or working while he waits.

“I'm not ashamed to ask (for) help. Please help us,” he said.

— Michael Kunzelman

Maya and Itay Regev

“Mom, I'll unpack my suitcase when I get back,” Maya Regev told her mother that Friday night, in a rush to get going. “See you tomorrow.”

And within a half-hour of returning to Israel from a family trip overseas, 21-year-old Maya and her brother Itay, 18, were on their way to the Tribe of Nova music festival, planning to dance the night away.

It was a typical activity for the duo, who both love to be on the move, gather with friends, and especially travel, said their parents, Ilan and Miri Regev. Maya had already bought her ticket for an extended trip to South America in December.

But early the next morning, Ilan Regev's phone rang. It was a frantic Maya. “Dad, they shot me, they shot me!” she screamed in a recording the family has released. “He is killing us, Dad, he is killing us.”

Her father begged her to send her location, to find a place to hide. “I'm coming,” he said.

Ilan Regev jumped in his car from his home in Herzliya, near Tel Aviv, and sped south to the festival site, where he was barred from entering. Soon, the Regev family discovered a Hamas video that showed Itay in captivity in Gaza.

Maya was not pictured, but the army has told the family both were hostages in Gaza. Officials gave no further information.

“I want to know that my kids are alive,” said Ilan Regev. Added their mother: “We don't know if they are eating. We don't know if they are drinking. If they are hurt.”

— Jocelyn Noveck

Hersh Goldberg-Polin

His mother describes Hersh Goldberg-Polin as like a lot of other young people.

The 23-year-old from Jerusalem loves music, wants to see the world and, now that he's finished his military service, has plans to go to university, his family said. But first he has to come home.

Goldberg-Polin was last seen on Oct. 7, when Hamas militants loaded him into the back of a pickup with

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other hostages abducted from the Tribe of Nova music festival.

Despite those harrowing accounts, his mother, Rachel Goldberg, holds out hope she will see him again. "He's a survivor," Goldberg said of her son, whose grin beams out from behind a sparse, youthful beard in family photos. "He's not like this big, bulky guy. But I think that survival has a lot to do with where you are mentally."

Born in Berkeley, California, Goldberg-Polin moved to Israel with his family when he was 7 years old.

As a child, he wanted to learn about the world, poring over maps and atlases to learn the names of capital cities and mountains. Later he became a fan of psychedelic trance music and once took a nine-week trek through six European countries so he could attend a series of raves.

Not surprising, then, that he and some friends headed to the festival, billed as a place "where the essence of unity and love combines forces with the best music."

Witnesses said Goldberg-Polin lost part of an arm when attackers tossed grenades into a temporary shelter where he and others had taken refuge, but he tied a tourniquet around it and walked out before being bundled into the truck.

Family and friends have organized the "Bring Hersh Home" campaign on social media, hoping he will still be able to take a planned backpack trip through southern Asia.

But first his mother hopes someone helps her son.

"It will require like the biggest heroism and strength and courage, but I want someone to help out and I want someone to help all of those hostages."

— Danica Kirka

Ada Sagi

Ada Sagi was getting ready to travel to London to celebrate her 75th birthday with family when Hamas militants attacked her kibbutz and took her hostage.

The trip was supposed to be a joyous occasion after a year of trauma. Her husband died of cancer last year, she had struggled with allergies and was recovering from hip replacement surgery. But the grandmother of six was getting through it, even though it was hard.

"They had a very, very, very strong bond of 54 years," her son Noam, a psychotherapist in London, said. "And my mum, this is her main thing now, really, just getting her life back after dealing with the loss of my dad."

Ada Sagi was born in Tel Aviv in 1948, the daughter of Holocaust survivors from Poland. She moved to a kibbutz at the age of 18 because she was attracted by the ideals of equality and humanity on which the communal settlements were built.

A mother of three, Ada decided to learn Arabic so she could make friends with her neighbors and build a better future for her children. She later taught the language to other Israelis as a way to improve communication with Palestinians who live near Kibbutz Nir Oz.

That was, for many years, her mission, Noam said.

While he hopes his mother's language skills help her negotiate with the hostage-takers, he is calling on the international community for assistance.

"The only hope I have now is ... for humanity to do something and for me to see my mother again and for my son to see his grandmother again," he said. "I think we need humanity to actually flex its muscle here, and" — by telling her story — "that is all I'm trying to do."

— Danica Kirka

Adina Moshe

David Moshe was born in Iraq. Decades later in Israel, his wife, Adina, would cook his favorite Iraqi food, including a traditional dish with dough, meat and rice.

But what really delighted the family, their granddaughter Anat recalls, was Adina's maqluba — a Middle Eastern meal served in a pot that is flipped upside-down at the table, releasing the steaming goodness inside. Pleasing her husband of more than a half-century, Anat Moshe said, was her grandmother's real culinary priority.

"They were so in love, you don't know how in love they were," the 25-year-old said. "Our Shabbat table

was always so full.”

It's wracked with heartbreak now.

On Oct. 7, Hamas fighters shot and killed David Moshe, 75, as he and Adina huddled in their bomb shelter in Nir Oz kibbutz. Militants burned the couple's house. The next time Anat Moshe saw her grandmother was in a video, in which the 72-year-old, in a red top, was sandwiched between two insurgents on a motorbike, driving away.

Her grandmother hasn't been heard from since, Anat Moshe said. She'd had heart surgery last year, and is without her medication.

Still, Anat Moshe brightened when she recalled her family life in Nir Oz. The community was the birthplace and landscape of Adina and David's romance and family. The two met at the pool, Anat said. Adina worked as a minder of small children, so generations of residents knew her.

But all along, low-level anxiety hummed about the community's proximity to Gaza.

"There was always like some concern about it, like rumors," Anat Moshe recalled. "She always told us that when the terrorists come to her house, she will make her coffee and put out some cookies and put out great food."

— Laurie Kellman

Moran Stela Yanai

Delicate pearls peek out from silver and stainless steel chains — bits of brightness and optimism among Moran Stela Yanai's jewelry designs that reflected cultures around the world.

Creating art to wear has been Yanai's passion, but not the only one, her brother-in-law Dan Mor said. Yanai, a 40-year-old Israeli who disappeared after the desert music festival, also fiercely protected people and animals.

"Moran is the softest soul," recalled Dan Mor, whose wife, Lea, is Moran's sister. "She could almost be annoying with how much she was so kind and sensitive to animals. You couldn't eat meat because she was so sensitive to animals being harmed — not just pets but farm animals and wild animals."

The family was horrified to recognize her in a video on TikTok that surfaced after the attack. In it, Yanai is sitting on the ground, looking terrified, amid derogatory Arabic text about Jews.

Days earlier, Yanai had posted a video on Instagram on her way to the festival, where she hoped to sell her designs. She posted a second video, recorded by a friend, of her art displayed on a table at the festival.

"Moran, kind-hearted, never caused pain to anyone, not even a fly," read the accompanying text. Her work, Mor said, is inspired by cultures around the world, including Chinese and Arab.

Mor, an actor, said his family in Tel Aviv feels Moran's absence deeply and tries to fill the wait by telling the world about her.

"My beautiful dear sister-in-law, auntie to my kids," he said. "She had a big heart, she has a big heart, and I'm hoping that heart is still pumping."

Ukraine says 3 civilians were killed in a daylight Russian cluster bomb attack

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian attack using cluster munitions killed three people Thursday in a suburb of Ukraine's southern city of Kherson, a Ukrainian official said, bringing the number of civilians to die in a day of war to at least six.

Five people were wounded in what Ukrainian Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said was heavy afternoon shelling of Kherson's Chornobayivka suburb. More than 60 residential and infrastructure buildings were damaged in the daylight attack, he said.

Cluster munitions — a type of bomb that opens in the air and releases smaller "bomblets" across a wide area — are used by both Russia and Ukraine, which has received them as military aid from the United States. Critics say the weapons litter the ground and harm and kill many more civilians than combatants.

Kherson city is the capital of a region of the same name that is located on the Dnieper River near the

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mouth of the Black Sea and a key gateway to Crimea. Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and uses it for logistics operations and rear supply depots during the current war.

Of military significance and lying on the war's long front line, the Kherson region has been a stage for heavy fighting. Ukrainian troops last week reported gaining multiple bridgeheads on the Russian-held eastern side of the river.

Before the afternoon attack, Russian forces fired other parts of the province with eight nighttime artillery barrages, killing a 42-year-old man in his apartment building and wounding another man, the Ukrainian presidential office said.

Russian shelling also killed two people in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, the office said.

It was not possible to independently verify the reports. Long-range Russian shelling that hits civilian areas has been a hallmark of Moscow's 21-month war in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian state media reported that TV journalist Boris Maksudov died after being wounded in a drone attack while working in southern Ukraine's Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia region

Maksudov, who worked for Russian state television channel Russia 24, was hit Wednesday while working on a story about Ukraine allegedly shelling civilians, according to Russia's Ministry of Defense. Zaporizhzhia is one of the four Ukrainian regions that Russia illegally annexed last year.

A stepped-up Russian bombardment of civilian infrastructure has prompted Ukraine and its Western allies to beef up air defense systems. Officials fear the Kremlin's forces will repeat their aerial attacks on the Ukrainian power grid this winter in an effort to break the country's will.

The grid is already showing signs of strain. Ukrainian national electricity operator Ukrenergo reported an energy deficit Wednesday due to a steep rise in consumption caused by a drop in temperatures after a spell of mild weather, a company statement said.

Ukrenergo asked system operators in Romania, Slovakia and Poland to provide emergency assistance.

At a meeting Wednesday of some 50 countries supporting Ukraine's war effort, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said they were placing extra emphasis on ground-based air defense, with Germany and France leading the European effort to furnish equipment.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post that "Ukraine's sky shield is getting more powerful literally every month."

Gaza has become a moonscape in war. When the battles stop, many fear it will remain uninhabitable

By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's military offensive has turned much of northern Gaza into an uninhabitable moonscape. Whole neighborhoods have been erased. Homes, schools and hospitals have been blasted by airstrikes and scorched by tank fire. Some buildings are still standing, but most are battered shells.

Nearly 1 million Palestinians have fled the north, including its urban center, Gaza City, as ground combat intensified. When the war ends, any relief will quickly be overshadowed by dread as displaced families come to terms with the scale of the calamity and what it means for their future.

Where would they live? Who would eventually run Gaza and pick up the pieces?

"I want to go home even if I have to sleep on the rubble of my house," said Yousef Hammash, an aid worker with the Norwegian Refugee Council who fled the ruins of the urban refugee camp of Jabaliya for southern Gaza. "But I don't see a future for my children here."

The Israeli army's use of powerful explosives in tightly packed residential areas — which Israel describes as the unavoidable outcome of Hamas using civilian sites as cover for its operations — has killed over 13,000 Palestinians and led to staggering destruction. Hamas denies the claim and accuses Israel of recklessly bombing civilians.

"When I left, I couldn't tell which street or intersection I was passing," said Mahmoud Jamal, a 31-year-old taxi driver who fled his northern hometown of Beit Hanoun this month. He described apartment buildings resembling open-air parking garages.

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Israel's bombardment has become one of the most intense air campaigns since World War II, said Emily Tripp, director of Airwars, a London-based conflict monitor. In the seven weeks since Hamas' unprecedented Oct. 7 attack, Israel unleashed more munitions than the United States did in any given year of its bombing campaign against the Islamic State group — a barrage the U.N. describes as the deadliest urban campaign since World War II.

In Israel's grainy thermal footage of airstrikes targeting Hamas tunnels, fireballs obliterate everything in sight. Videos by Hamas' military wing feature fighters with rocket-propelled grenades trekking through smoke-filled streets. Fortified bulldozers have cleared land for Israeli tanks.

"The north of Gaza has been turned into one big ghost town," said Mkhaimer Abusada, a political scientist at Al-Azhar University in Gaza City who fled to Egypt last week. "People have nothing to return to."

About half of all buildings across northern Gaza have been damaged or destroyed, according to an analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of the CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University. With the U.N. estimating 1.7 million people are newly homeless, many wonder if Gaza will ever recover.

"You'll end up having displaced people living in tents for a long time," said Raphael Cohen, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, a research group.

The war has knocked 27 of 35 hospitals across Gaza out of operation, according to the World Health Organization. The destruction of other critical infrastructure has consequences for years to come.

"Bakeries and grain mills have been destroyed, agriculture, water and sanitation facilities," said Scott Paul, a senior humanitarian policy adviser for Oxfam America. "You need more than four walls and a ceiling for a place to be habitable, and in many cases people don't even have that."

Across the entire enclave, over 41,000 homes — 45% of Gaza's total housing stock — are too destroyed to be lived in, according to the U.N.

"All I left at home was dead bodies and rubble," said Mohammed al-Hadad, a 28-year-old party planner who fled Shati refugee camp along Gaza City's shoreline. Shati sustained nearly 14,000 incidents of war damage — varying from an airstrike crater to a collapsed building — over just 0.5 square kilometers (0.2 square miles), the satellite data analysis shows.

Southern Gaza — where scarce food, water and fuel has spawned a humanitarian crisis — has been spared the heaviest firepower, according to the analysis.

But that's changing. In the past two weeks, satellite data shows a spike in damage across the southern town of Khan Younis. Residents say the military has showered eastern parts of town with evacuation warnings.

Israel has urged those in southern Gaza to move again, toward a slice of territory called Muwasi along the coast. As of Thursday, Israel and Hamas were still working out the details of a four-day truce that would allow more humanitarian aid to enter Gaza and facilitate an exchange of Palestinian prisoners for Israeli hostages.

Displaced Palestinians said four days won't be enough.

"This is our nakba," said 32-year-old journalist Tareq Hajjaj, referring to the mass displacement of an estimated 700,000 Palestinians during the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation — an exodus Palestinians call the "nakba," or "catastrophe."

Although publicly Palestinians reject the idea of being transferred outside Gaza, some privately admit they cannot stay, even after the war ends.

"We will never return home," said Hajjaj, who fled his home in Shijaiyah in eastern Gaza City. "Those who stay here will face the most horrific situation they could imagine."

The 2014 Israel-Hamas war leveled Shijaiyah, turning the neighborhood into fields of inert gray rubble. The \$5 billion reconstruction effort there and across Gaza remains unfinished to this day.

"This time the scale of destruction is exponentially higher," said Giulia Marini, international advocacy officer at Palestinian rights group Al Mezan. "It will take decades for Gaza to go back to where it was before."

It remains unclear who will take responsibility for that task. At the recent security summit in Bahrain,

Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi vowed Arab states would not "come and clean the mess after Israel."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants the army to restore security, and American officials have pushed the seemingly unlikely scenario of the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority taking over the strip.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, regarded by many Palestinians as weak, has dismissed that idea in the absence of Israeli efforts toward a two-state solution.

Despite the war's horrors, Yasser Elsheshtawy, a professor of architecture at Columbia University, hopes reconstruction could offer an opportunity to turn Gaza's ramshackle refugee camps and long deteriorating infrastructure into "something more habitable and equitable and humane," including public parks and a revitalized seafront.

But Palestinians say it's not only shattered infrastructure that requires rebuilding but a traumatized society. "Gaza has become a very scary place," Abusada said. "It will always be full of memories of death and destruction."

Hundreds of German police raid properties of Hamas supporters in Berlin and across the country

By KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Hundreds of police officers searched the properties of Hamas members and followers in Germany on Thursday morning following a formal ban on any activity by or in support of the militant group.

The German government implemented the ban on Nov. 2 and dissolved Samidoun, a group that was behind a celebration in Berlin of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Germany's domestic intelligence service estimates that Hamas has around 450 members in the country. Their activities range from expressions of sympathy and propaganda activities to financing and fundraising activities to strengthen the organization abroad.

"We are continuing our consistent action against radical Islamists," German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said. "By banning Hamas and Samidoun in Germany, we have sent a clear signal that we will not tolerate any glorification or support of Hamas' barbaric terror against Israel."

The raids, which mostly took place in Berlin, were meant to enforce the bans and to further investigate the groups, the German interior ministry said in a statement.

A total of 16 properties were searched by 500 police officers in Berlin and the states of Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein.

In Berlin alone, more than 300 police officers carried out searches at 11 locations in order to seize evidence and assets. Seven searches were related to Hamas and four to Samidoun. The searches mainly took place at the homes of supporters and the premises of a Palestinian association, German news agency dpa reported.

Germany has been clamping down on groups supporting antisemitism in the wake of the latest Israel-Hamas war.

On Tuesday, police raided the homes of 17 people in the southern German state of Bavaria who were accused of spreading antisemitic hate speech and threats targeting Jews online. On Nov. 16, German police raided 54 locations across the country in an investigation of a Hamburg-based organization suspected of promoting the Iranian leadership's ideology and possibly supporting activities of Hezbollah in Germany.

"We are keeping a close eye on the Islamist scene," Faeser said. "Islamists and antisemites cannot and must not feel safe anywhere here." She said the members and supporters of Hamas in Germany are also committed to influencing the political and social discourse in the country.

Hamas has vowed to annihilate Israel and has been responsible for many suicide bombings and other deadly attacks on civilians and Israeli soldiers. After the group's incursion into Israel in October, Israel vowed to wipe out Hamas.

The U.S. State Department designated Hamas a terrorist group in 1997. The European Union and other

Western countries also consider it a terrorist organization.

To save the climate, the oil and gas sector must slash planet-warming operations, report says

By SIBI ARASU Associated Press

The oil and gas sector, one of the major emitters of planet-warming gases, will need a rapid and substantial overhaul for the world to avoid even worse extreme weather events fueled by human-caused climate change, according to a report released Thursday.

The current investment of \$800 billion a year in the oil and gas sector will need to be cut in half and greenhouse emissions, which result from the burning of fossil fuels like oil, will need to fall by 60% to give the world a fighting chance to meet its climate goals, the International Energy Agency said. Greenhouse gases go up into the atmosphere and heat the planet, leading to several impacts, including extreme weather events.

The IEA's report comes just ahead of the United Nations climate conference, or COP28, which begins next week. Oil and gas companies, as well as other people and organizations connected to fossil fuels, often attend the meeting, drawing criticism from environmentalists and climate experts. But others say the sector needs to be at the table to discuss how to transition to cleaner energy.

"The oil and gas industry is facing a moment of truth at COP28 in Dubai," said Fatih Birol, executive director of the IEA in a press statement on the report's release. "Oil and gas producers need to make profound decisions about their future place in the global energy sector."

Last year's climate conference in Egypt saw 400 people connected with fossil fuel industries attending the event, according to an analysis by The Associated Press. The upcoming meeting has also come under fire for appointing the chief of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company as the talks' president.

The energy sector is responsible for over two-thirds of all human activity-related greenhouse gas emissions, and oil and gas is responsible for about half of those, according to the IEA. Oil and gas companies are also responsible for over 60% of methane emissions — a gas that traps about 87 times more heat than carbon dioxide on a 20-year timescale.

Oil and gas companies can find alternative revenue from the clean energy economy, including hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels and carbon capture technologies, the report said. Both clean hydrogen — made from renewable electricity — and carbon capture — which takes carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere — are currently untested at scale.

The report looked at climate promises made by countries as well as a scenario where the world had reached net zero emissions by 2050. It found that if countries deliver on all climate pledges, demand for oil and gas will be 45% lower than today's level by 2050. If the world reaches net zero by then, demand would be down 75%, it said.

Earlier this year, another IEA report found that the world's oil, gas and coal demand will likely peak by the end of this decade.

Vibhuti Garg, a New Delhi-based energy analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, said that the need for oil and gas is "bound to decline."

"There are cheaper alternatives that are cleaner, so countries will start using those options and reduce their reliance on these expensive fuels," she said.

Venice rolls out day-tripper fee to try to regulate mass crowds on peak weekends

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Venice authorities on Thursday unveiled a pilot program to charge day-trippers 5 euros (\$5.45) apiece to enter the fragile lagoon city on peak weekends next year in an effort to reduce crowds, encourage longer visits and improve the quality of life for residents.

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The rollout of the tourist "contribution" program came after Venice, a UNESCO World Heritage site, narrowly escaped being placed on the U.N. agency's danger list earlier this year because of the threat that overtourism was having on its delicate ecosystem. Member states cited the proposed new entry fee in deciding to spare Venice from the list.

Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro stressed Thursday that the fee is not a new tourist tax or an attempt to bring in extra revenue. Rather, he said, it is a first-of-its-kind experiment in regulating tourist flows in one of the world's most-visited places by incentivizing visitors to avoid high-traffic periods and come on other days.

"Our attempt is to make a more livable city," he said at a news conference outlining the pilot program.

In all, 29 days from April to mid-July -- including most weekends --- will be subject to the day-tripper fee during peak hours from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m., meaning visitors who come into Venice for dinner or a concert won't have to pay.

A host of exemptions apply, including for residents and Venetian-born visitors, students and workers, as well as tourists who have hotel or other lodging reservations.

Starting on Jan. 16, a website, www.cda.ve.it, will go live at which visitors can "reserve" their day in Venice. Day trippers pay 5 euros and get a QR code that will then be checked at spot controls at seven access points around the city, including at the main train station.

Visitors with hotel reservations enter their hotel information and also get a QR code to show, without having to pay since their hotel bill will already include a Venice lodging fee.

After COVID-19 lockdowns devastated Venice's tourism industry, the city of narrow alleyways, canals and islands has been trying to rethink its relationship with visitors in a more sustainable way while also seeking to incentivize its residents to stay put.

Venice has been forced to take action in response to the steady exodus of Venetians to the mainland and pressure from UNESCO and environmentalists, who also lobbied successfully to have the government ban big cruise ships from sailing past St. Mark's Square and through the Giudecca canal.

Venice has been pointing to longer-term tourists as key to its survival since they tend to spend more. Brugnaro said in no way does the new day-tripper contribution discourage tourism overall, but just seeks to manage it better. He acknowledged the visitor program will probably have glitches and will need to be amended. But he said that after years of study and talk, it was time to roll it out.

Today in History: November 24 Jack Ruby shoots Lee Harvey Oswald

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, Nov. 24, the 328th day of 2023. There are 37 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 24, 1963, Jack Ruby shot and mortally wounded Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, in a scene captured on live television.

On this date:

In 1859, British naturalist Charles Darwin published "On the Origin of Species," which explained his theory of evolution by means of natural selection.

In 1865, Mississippi became the first Southern state to enact laws which came to be known as "Black Codes" aimed at limiting the rights of newly freed Blacks; other states of the former Confederacy soon followed.

In 1941, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Edwards v. California*, unanimously struck down a California law prohibiting people from bringing impoverished non-residents into the state.

In 1947, a group of writers, producers and directors, who would become known as the "Hollywood Ten," was cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to answer questions about alleged Communist influence in the movie industry.

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In 1971, a hijacker calling himself "Dan Cooper" (but who became popularly known as "D.B. Cooper") parachuted from a Northwest Orient Airlines 727 over the Pacific Northwest after receiving \$200,000 in ransom; his fate remains unknown.

In 1974, the bone fragments of a 3.2 million-year-old hominid were discovered by scientists in Ethiopia; the skeletal remains were nicknamed "Lucy."

In 1987, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed on terms to scrap shorter- and medium-range missiles.

In 1989, Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu (chow-SHES'-koo) was unanimously re-elected Communist Party chief. (Within a month, he was overthrown in a popular uprising and executed.)

In 1991, Queen singer Freddie Mercury died in London at age 45 of AIDS-related pneumonia.

In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court stepped into the bitter overtime struggle for the White House, agreeing to consider George W. Bush's appeal against the hand recounting of ballots in Florida.

In 2012, fire raced through a garment factory in Bangladesh that supplied major retailers in the West, killing 112 people; an official said many of the victims were trapped because the eight-story building lacked emergency exits.

In 2013, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu harshly condemned the international community's nuclear deal with Iran, calling it a "historic mistake" and saying he was not bound by the agreement.

In 2014, it was announced that a grand jury in St. Louis County, Missouri, had decided against indicting Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson in the death of Michael Brown; the decision enraged protesters who set fire to buildings and cars and looted businesses in the area where Brown had been fatally shot.

In 2017, militants attacked a crowded mosque in Egypt with gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades, killing more than 300 people in the deadliest-ever attack by Islamic extremists in the country.

In 2020, Pennsylvania officials certified Joe Biden as the winner of the presidential vote in the state; the Trump campaign had gone to court trying to prevent the certification.

In 2021, three men were convicted of murder in the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, the Black man who was running through a Georgia subdivision in February 2020 when the white strangers chased him, trapped him on a quiet street and blasted him with a shotgun.

Today's Birthdays: Basketball Hall of Famer Oscar Robertson is 85. Country singer Johnny Carver is 83. Former NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue (TAG'-lee-uh-boo) is 83. Rock drummer Pete Best is 82. Actor-comedian Billy Connolly is 81. Former White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater is 81. Former congressman and Motion Picture Association of America Chairman Dan Glickman is 79. Singer Lee Michaels is 78. Actor Dwight Schultz is 76. Actor Stanley Livingston is 73. Rock musician Clem Burke (Blondie; The Romantics) is 69. Actor/director Ruben Santiago-Hudson is 67. Actor Denise Crosby is 66. U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas is 64. Actor Shae D'Lyn is 61. Rock musician John Squire (The Stone Roses) is 61. Rock musician Gary Stonadge (Big Audio) is 61. Actor Conleth Hill is 59. Actor-comedian Brad Sherwood is 59. Actor Garret Dillahunt is 59. Actor-comedian Scott Krinsky is 55. Rock musician Chad Taylor (Live) is 53. Actor Lola Glaudini is 52. Actor Danielle Nicolet is 50. Actor-writer-director-producer Stephen Merchant is 49. Actor Colin Hanks is 46. Actor Katherine Heigl (HY'-guhl) is 45. Actor Sarah Hyland is 33.