



Mostly cloudy 72/57 • Tomorrow: Rain 63/57 B6

Democracy Dies in Darkness

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025 • \$4

In a Damascus alley, residents of a society divided by suspicion and betrayals wonder who among them contributed to the former regime's tyranny



Fall of Assad's informant state leaves Syria riven

STORY BY LOUISA LOVELUCK AND ZAKARIA ZAKARIA
WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY SALWAN GEORGES
IN DAMASCUS, SYRIA

A man looks at photos of disappeared people at Marjeh Square, known as Martyrs' Square, in Damascus, Syria, in January.

The Assad regime made Syria an informant state, with surveillance that turned the country on itself. Neighbors and colleagues reported on each other in every district and workplace: what they said, where they went, who came for dinner.

After more than half a century, that suffocating regime melted away overnight in December, as rebel forces marched on the capital, Damascus. Left behind is a society divided by suspicion and perfidy, shadowed by the question of who among them had quietly contributed to the Assads' tyranny.

On a single alley, the grievances born of betrayal are playing out.

Hamdy al-Barbary was tending to a group of nesting pigeons on his roof in March when he heard the first bullet whip past his face.

He ducked, another whizzed past, and he fell backward as he scrambled to the stairs, he recalled. He knew which house the shots had come from.

Neighbors reviled his father, Abu Ayman, a baker, labeling him an informant for the Assad regime during Syria's long civil war. Abu Ayman denies being an informer but acknowledged in a recent interview that he once led security forces from the notorious Palestine military intelligence branch to the homes of people he knew, who he said had threatened him. They died in custody, he and Hamdy said.

Several doors down the alleyway from the Barbary home lived the Moghrabi family, who said they had long been known in the area as government opponents. They recalled a tide of fear

SEE SYRIA ON A18

High court allows end to protections for Venezuelans

RULING AFFECTS UP TO 350,000 MIGRANTS

Justices lift bar on Trump undoing Biden order

BY JUSTIN JOUVENAL,
SABRINA RODRIGUEZ AND
ARELIS R. HERNÁNDEZ

The Supreme Court said Monday that the Trump administration can cancel temporary protections for up to 350,000 Venezuelans — a major undoing of a Biden administration decision that allowed those migrants to live and work in the United States for humanitarian reasons.

Immigrant advocates said the move could have devastating effects on large communities of Venezuelans, some of whom have lived in the U.S. for many years. Advocates said they thought deportation efforts could begin immediately, or in the next few weeks.

As is typical when they act on emergency requests, the justices did not explain their decision, which will remain in effect while a legal fight over rescinding protected status plays out in the lower courts. The court, which ruled against Trump in two other recent emergency cases that involved summary deportations without due process, said some Venezuelans who lose protected status might initiate their own legal challenges if the government tries to deport them.

Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson was the only justice to say she would have kept in place a lower-court decision that blocked the Trump administration from removing protected status while litigation continued.

The Biden administration created protected status for Venezuelans — and extended it shortly

SEE VENEZUELAN ON A9

Recusals: Five justices withdrew from a book publisher's case. A9

Judge rules president can't dismantle Peace Institute

BY DEREK HAWKINS

A federal judge in Washington ruled Monday that the Trump administration exceeded its authority when it dismantled the U.S. Institute of Peace, an independent nonprofit group created by Congress to help resolve violent international conflicts.

U.S. District Judge Beryl A. Howell said the institute, while part of the federal government, was separate from the executive branch; therefore, President Donald Trump lacked the power to terminate its board of will.

"The President's efforts here to take over an organization outside of those bounds, contrary to statute established by Congress and by acts of force and threat using local and federal law enforcement officers, represented a gross usurpation of power and a way of conducting government affairs that unnecessarily traumatized the committed leadership and employees of USIP, who deserved better," Howell wrote in her 102-page opinion.

Administration officials and members of billionaire Elon Musk's U.S. DOGE Service — aided by local and federal law enforcement agencies — seized the institute's privately owned headquarters in March and summarily removed its leaders.

Soon after, they began terminating staff and programs, re-

SEE INSTITUTE ON A9

After Biden's diagnosis, a complex outpouring

Well-wishes, questions and conspiracies abound in deeply divided country

BY NAFTALI BENDAVID,
MATT VISER,
JOEL ACHENBACH
AND PATRICK SVTEK

When a former president receives a serious medical diagnosis, the traditional response has been to set aside political differences, offer warm praise and wish the individual a speedy recovery and complete return to health.

In many cases, that's exactly what happened Sunday after former president Joe Biden disclosed that he has an aggressive form of prostate cancer. President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly attacked Biden since taking office, wished Biden "a fast and successful recovery."

But in a reflection of today's harsh political environment and reignited questions over Biden's health during his reelection campaign and his inner circle's handling of the situation, some Republicans and right-wing activists wasted little time asserting, without evidence, that Biden and his circle covered up the diagnosis.

Trump, speaking in the Oval Office on Monday, said the diagnosis was "very sad, actually" and

that he felt "badly about it." But he also questioned why it wasn't caught earlier.

"That test is standard to pretty much anybody getting a physical, a good physical," he said. "We had the doctors at the White House and over at Walter Reed, which is a fantastic hospital. I do it — I did a very complete physical, including cognitive tests."

Trump inaccurately referred to Biden's diagnosis as "stage 9," an apparent reference to a pathology report giving his cancer a Gleason score of 9 on a scale that rises to 10 and indicates an aggressive cancer. Trump also questioned Biden's cognitive ability.

"If you take a look, it's the same doctor that said that Joe was cognitively fine, there was nothing wrong with him," Trump said. "If it's the same doctor who said there was nothing wrong there, that's being proven to be a sad situation. ... The doctor said he's just fine. And it's turned out that's not so. It's very dangerous."

"Unbelievable this was missed, but the truth is, his physician was more concerned about assisting with the political cover up than providing world class medical care," Rep. Ronny Jackson (R-Texas) posted on social media Sunday night.

Jackson was himself White

SEE BIDEN ON A8

Debate: Biden's cancer rekindles discussion of prostate testing. A8



TOM BRENNER/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

'Revenge porn' legislation becomes law

First lady Melania Trump speaks at the White House on Monday before President Donald Trump signed a bill championed by her that makes it a crime to post sexual images and videos of a person online — including imagery of real people generated by artificial intelligence — without consent.

Trump to visit Hill to whip votes for tax bill

BY CLEVE R. WOOTSON JR.
AND MARIANNA SOTOMAYOR

President Donald Trump will meet with House Republicans on Capitol Hill on Tuesday in an effort to unite his party behind his tax and immigration agenda, according to three people who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe Trump's

plans.

Trump's massive tax and immigration bill narrowly passed the House Budget Committee late Sunday after a revolt from GOP hard-liners concerned about spending. This week, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) and his leadership team will try to unite the conference around the One Big Beautiful

Bill.

Trump's in-person advocacy shows a commitment to keeping the bill on track — and potential holdouts in line. The stakes for him are high: He has been bragging about the pace of his "golden age" agenda but faces headwinds, including economic nerves over tariffs, legal challenges and, now,

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The Washington Post
Year 148, No. 54222

