

# GWIRE

WEEKLY DIGEST  
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# LOCAL

## WILDFIRES TURN VALLEY AND ALL OF CALIFORNIA INTO A SCI-FI LANDSCAPE

August 20, 2020 | Bill McEwen

As crews battle 367 wildfires in heat-wave-baked California, the satellite view from above shows a state enveloped in smoke. On

the ground, firefighters are doing their best to contain the blazes — many of them ignited by nearly 11,000 lightning strikes during a 72-hour period.

the ground, firefighters are doing their best to contain the blazes — many of them ignited by nearly 11,000 lightning strikes during a 72-hour period. Strong winds are spreading some of the fires, as well as the smoke that is darkening skies, dropping soot, and making the sun look like something from a sci-fi movie.

### Bay Area Air Is Some of the Worst in the World

As bad as the air is in Fresno, it's worse in parts of the Bay Area, which customarily enjoys clear air scoured by ocean breezes. With wildfires burning north, east, and south of San Francisco, the air quality index there on Wednesday among the worst in the world, KQED reported. To compare the Bay Area's air quality to that in the Valley today, click on this link. Because of the wildfires, the Valley Air District has issued a health caution. And, district officials are advising residents to reduce exposure to particulate matter emissions by staying indoors. "PM pollution can trigger asthma attacks, aggravate chronic bronchitis, and increase the risk of heart attack and stroke," the district said in a news release. "Anyone experiencing poor air quality due to wildfire smoke should move indoors, to a filtered, air-conditioned environment with

windows closed." District officials also advise that common cloth and paper masks people are wearing because of COVID-19 "may not protect them from wildfire smoke."

### SCU Complex Lightning Fires Spread 120 Feet a Minute

A wildfire in Del Puerto Canyon near Patterson in the north Valley is contributing to Fresno area smoke. That fire is part of the SCU Lightning Complex series of fires. Cal Fire said Thursday that the SCU Lightning Complex grew to 137,495 acres overnight — or about 215 square miles. Low humidity at night is enabling the fire to grow day and night, said Stephen Vollmer, a captain with Cal Fire's Santa Clara unit. Vollmer explained that embers are shooting up to three-quarters of a mile, and the fire is spreading by 120 feet a minute. "The first is moving faster than we can safely engage it," Vollmer said in a Twitter video.

### Breathing in Smoke Raises COVID-19 Risk

Dr. Madhavi Dandu, professor of medicine at UCSF, told KQED that breathing smoky air could make people more susceptible to COVID-19. "Air pollution and all type of particulate matter, but especially the particulate 2.5 that we see in fires, can really impact both lung health as well as just general immune health," Dandu said. "One of the things that it does is destroy these little hairs that we call cilia that are in the lungs, which are ways...

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## 'I HAVE TO FIGHT': FRESNO SALON OWNER OPENS DOORS IN DEFIANCE OF STATE

GV Wire/Jim Jakobs

August 18, 2020 | Jim Jakobs

After weeks of waiting, stress, and lots of anxiety, Tanya Alvarado opened her Tower District salon Tuesday. Nestled into a small space near Olive Avenue and North Van Ness Ave., 'Salon Posh' had its lights on, and people walking by were taking notice.

Alvarado's first client arrived around 10 a.m. She allowed GV Wire<sup>SM</sup> to arrive shortly thereafter, requiring a temperature check and hand sanitization. She says she started her business about 8 years ago. During the pandemic shutdown she estimates she's lost about \$30,000. Alvarado has 6 independent stylists in her shop that lease space from her. She says they

are all in favor of opening. Only Alvarado was in the salon Tuesday morning, but she expects all her stylists will return soon. She said she's ready if she gets a visit from local or state enforcement officials. "My plan is for them to do a walkthrough and show me how how am I putting my client or my staff at risk? Please show me what it is I'm doing wrong,"

Plexiglass separates the salon's chairs from one another. Alvarado says customers are required to get a temperature check, sign a waiver, and use hand sanitizer before they pass by the front desk. She acknowledged the possibility of being cited for...

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## HOSPITAL-TRAINED CHAPLAINS PROVIDE SOLACE IN FARM FIELDS

August 10, 2020 | Sponsored by Community Medical Centers

After spending two winter seasons working California and Arizona fruit harvests, Rigoberto Escobedo Muñoz expects the loneliness of being away from his wife and four children in Tamaulipas, Mexico. But this winter it's more heart-wrenching. When he headed north this time, his 9-year-old...

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## COX, COSTA VOW TO FUND DELIVERING THE MAIL ... AND BALLOTS

August 18, 2020 | David Taub

Blaming President Donald Trump for attempting to manipulate the election by slowing the postal service, two Valley congressmen vowed to fight for the mail. Standing in front of the post office in downtown Fresno, TJ Cox and Jim Costa, both Fresno Democrats, said they are returning to Washington later this week to support a party plan to fund the post office and prevent further reductions of service.

Costa said that cuts to the postal service puts "Americans health and safety at risk." Preserving the integrity of the election was the top concern for Costa and Cox. In the era of COVID-19, several states are anticipating an increase of ballots returned by mail. Costa said Trump is attempting to steer the election in his...

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# STATE

## Q&A: CALIFORNIA'S NEW ELECTRICITY-BLACKOUT CHALLENGE

August 20, 2020 | AP News

BERKELEY — As if the pandemic and economic recession weren't bad enough, millions of Californians now face recurring threats of abrupt blackouts during a heat wave in the nation's most populous state. California's Independent System Operator, a nonprofit agency that man-

Conservation helped avoid threatened outages again Tuesday and may be needed again Wednesday to keep the power running. Temperatures are finally supposed to ease Thursday, but more outages could still loom if things heat up as much as some forecasts suggest.

ages the state's power supply, ordered utilities to impose temporary blackouts for the first time in 19 years last Friday and did so again Saturday, pulling the plug on hundreds of thousands of customers for one to two

hours. The specter of so-called "rolling outages" have loomed as a possibility every day since, and were narrowly averted Monday evening after "stunning" conservation efforts, according to ISO president Steve Berberich.

Conservation helped avoid threatened outages again Tuesday and may be needed again Wednesday to keep the power running. Temperatures are finally supposed to ease Thursday, but more outages could still loom if things heat up as much as some forecasts suggest. The blackouts seemed to catch government officials off guard, despite an ISO warning in January that the state could run low on power over the summer if several western states were to experience extreme heat at the same time — which indeed happened several days ago.

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"This has been a rude awakening for California," said Najmedin Meshkati, a University of Southern California civil and environmental engineering professor who has studied the state's power supply. The outages prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, to order an investigation into how the state's energy supply failed to keep up with demand. President Donald Trump also weighed in with a Tuesday tweet blaming the state's Democrats for the mess. Here's a look at California's latest challenge:

**Q: California had rolling blackouts two decades ago because of power shortages. Why hasn't it learned from past mistakes?**

Circumstances were very different in 2000–2001. Back then, a recent deregulation of the state power market was going horribly awry as energy traders manipulated energy supplies to gouge utilities. Blackout fallout eventually led voters to oust then-Gov. Gray Davis in a recall election.

Circumstances were very different in 2000–2001. Back then, a recent deregulation of the state power market was going horribly awry as energy traders manipulated energy supplies to gouge utilities. Blackout fallout eventually led voters to oust then-Gov. Gray Davis in a recall election. These days, California is trying to adapt to environmental mandates that have shut down natural-gas power plants in favor of solar and wind energy. In addition, the San Onofre nuclear power plant in southern California shut down in 2013 for safety reasons. Nearby western states have also been phasing...





CALIFORNIA FARMING COUNTRY  
BUCKLES UNDER COVID-19. WILL  
PANDEMIC MAKE OR BREAK THE VALLEY?

Modesto Bee/Andy Alfaro

August 13, 2020 | By Dale Kalser, Manuela Tobias, and Tony Bizjak

She was afraid of catching the coronavirus – so fearful, in fact, that she switched jobs to pack tomatoes for an employer who seemed to be taking the right precautions. But Maria Claudia Garcia got sick anyway.

A farmworker from Venezuela living in the San Joaquin Valley town of Mendota, she came down with a harsh case of COVID-19. She experienced intense fevers and headaches. She lost her sense of smell and taste. Her husband, also a farmworker, got sick

as well. Speaking in Spanish, she summed up the ravages of the coronavirus this way: “It’s like your body isn’t yours anymore.”

**21,000 Coronavirus Cases and Counting**  
Garcia is one of more than 21,000 residents who’ve been sickened in Fresno County through Aug. 18. She took ill in mid-July — about the time when the pandemic began seriously hammering the Valley. Within weeks of Garcia being stricken, the Trump administration’s coronavirus task force...

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NEWSOM SAYS NEW  
RULES COMING FOR  
REOPENING COUNTIES

August 19, 2020 | AP News

With many areas of California seeing a significant slowdown in the spread of the coronavirus, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday his administration is working with local health officials on rules for businesses to reopen in counties that come off the state’s watch list. San Diego, Placer and Santa Cruz counties exited the list this week and San Francisco is poised to join them Thursday. Orange County could soon follow.

**Restrictions Reimposed After Cases Spiked**  
As cases were spiking last month, Newsom closed bars and indoor dining statewide and shut indoor gyms, salons and other businesses — and prohibited inside religious services at churches — for counties...

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ANALYSIS: WILL  
CALIFORNIA REALLY  
CHANGE POLICING?

August 19, 2020 | CalMatters

It’s crunch month for California legislators who promised sweeping reforms in response to the police killing of George Floyd and the protests his death unleashed. Yet some social justice advocates doubt that politicians’ stomachs for change are as strong as their rhetoric:

A Senate bill to excommunicate corrupt or misbehaving cops may be denied a floor vote, while another measure to involve the attorney general in certain deadly force investigations is gaining new opposition from those who say it won’t do much if signed into law. State lawmakers have until Aug. 31 to consider at least 15 bills seeking to reign in, report on and oversee the kind of police violence that ended the...

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# THOUSANDS OF CHICKS DEAD ON ARRIVAL AFTER POST OFFICE CUTS

August 20, 2020 | AP News

PORTLAND, Maine — At least 4,800 chicks shipped to Maine farmers through the U.S. Postal Service have arrived dead in recent weeks after rapid cuts hit the federal mail carrier's operations, U.S. Rep. Chellie Pingree said. Pingree, a Maine Democrat, is raising the issue of the dead chicks and the losses farms are facing in a letter to Postmaster General Louis DeJoy and U.S. Department of Agriculture Commissioner Sonny Perdue, The Portland Press Herald reported. Pauline Henderson, who owns Pine Tree Poultry in New Sharon, Maine, told the newspaper she was shocked last week when all of the 800 chicks sent to her from a hatchery in Pennsylvania were dead. "Usually they arrive every three weeks like clockwork," she said.

Thousands of birds that moved through the Postal Service's processing center in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, were also dead, impacting several farms in Maine and New Hampshire, Henderson said.

Thousands of birds that moved through the Postal Service's processing center in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, were also dead, impacting several farms in Maine and New Hampshire, Henderson said. Steve Doherty, a spokesman for the USPS, said the agency "can't locate a claim being filed for this loss." Some animals, including live chicks, can be mailed safely under proper conditions. "It's one more of the consequences of this disorganization, this sort of chaos they've created at the post office and nobody thought through

when they were thinking of slowing down the mail," Pingree said, adding that her office has received dozens of complaints from farmers and others trying to raise a small flock of chickens in the backyard. Pingree said she isn't sure if Perdue is aware of how the changes in the Postal Service are impacting smaller poultry farmers in the U.S.

Steve Doherty, a spokesman for the USPS, said the agency "can't locate a claim being filed for this loss." Some animals, including live chicks, can be mailed safely under proper conditions.

## The Postal Service Is the Only Entity That Ships Live Chicks and Other Small Animals

"This is a system that's always worked before and it's worked very well until these changes started being made," Pingree said. DeJoy, a Republican donor who's the first postmaster general who did not come from the ranks of the Postal Service, took control of the agency in June and has since swiftly engineered cuts and operational changes that are disrupting mail delivery operations. In Maine, two mail-sorting machines were dismantled at the state's postal distribution hub.

He announced Tuesday he would halt some changes to mail delivery that critics blamed for widespread delays and warned could disrupt the November election, which is expected to bring a surge of mail-in ballots because of the coronavirus pandemic. DeJoy is scheduled to testify before the Senate on Friday. President...

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August 20, 2020 | AP News

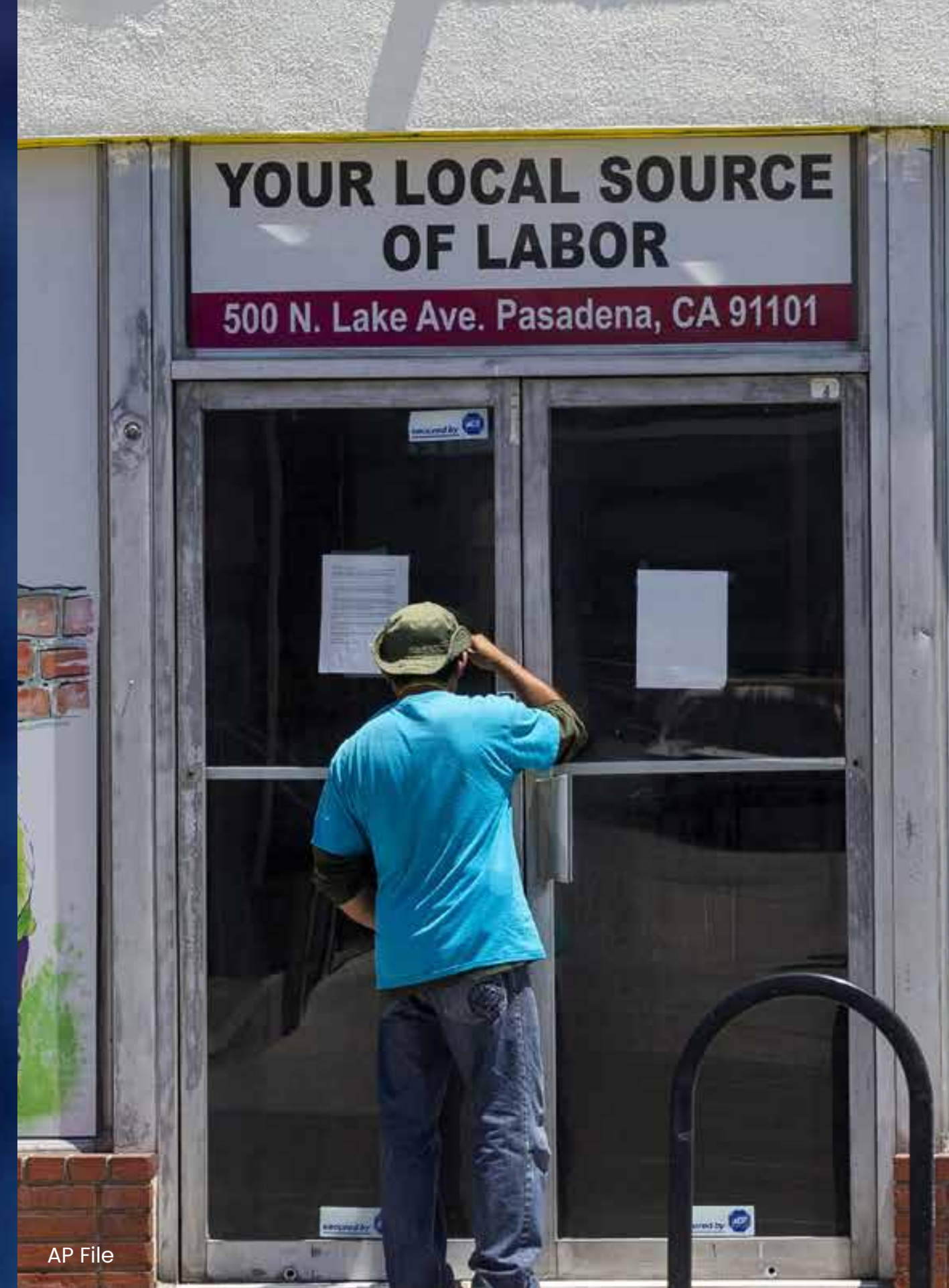
WILMINGTON, Del. — Former President Barack Obama warned that American democracy could falter if President Donald Trump is reelected, a stunning rebuke of his successor that was echoed by Kamala Harris at the Democratic Convention as she embraced her historic role as the first Black woman on a national political ticket.

Obama, himself a barrier breaker as the nation’s first Black president, pleaded with voters Wednesday

night to “embrace your own responsibility as citizens — to make sure that the basic tenets of our democracy endure. Because that’s what is at stake right now. Our democracy.”

Throughout their convention, the Democrats have summoned a collective urgency about the dangers of Trump as president. In 2016, they dismissed and sometimes trivialized him. Now they are casting him as an existential threat to the country. The tone...

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# RISE IN JOBLESS CLAIMS REFLECTS STRUGGLING US ECONOMY

August 20, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The coronavirus recession struck swiftly and violently. Now, with the U.S. economy still in the grip of the outbreak five months later, the recovery looks fitful and uneven — and painfully slow.

The latest evidence came Thursday, when the government reported that the number of workers applying for unemployment climbed back over 1 million last week after two weeks of declines.

The figures suggest that employers are still slashing jobs even as some businesses reopen and some sectors like housing and manufacturing have rebounded. “Getting the virus in check dictates when...

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## NOW PLAYING AT THE MALL PARKING LOT: MOVIES, DRAG SHOWS

August 19, 2020 | AP News

NEW YORK — Angel Dougherty went to the mall last month — not to shop, but to watch a drive-in drag show in the parking lot. “This year has been so anxiety filled and chaotic, I figured this experience would be something to lighten the mood,” says Dougherty, who paid to see the stars of TV’s “RuPaul’s Drag Race” dance in front of hundreds of parked cars at a shopping center in Paramus, New Jersey.

After being closed for months due to the coronavirus pandemic, malls are bringing all types of drive-in entertainment to their massive parking lots, hoping to lure people back to their properties. A mall in upstate New York, for example, is hosting...

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# WORLD

## PALESTINIANS IN GAZA RALLY AGAINST ISRAEL-UAE DEAL

August 19, 2020 | AP News

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday rallied against the U.S.-brokered deal to normalize ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Protesters burned Israeli and American flags, trampled on posters of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald

**Protesters burned Israeli and American flags, trampled on posters of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Donald Trump, and chanted “normalization is betrayal to Jerusalem and Palestine.”**

Trump, and chanted “normalization is betrayal to Jerusalem and Palestine.”

Unlike Palestinian protesters last Friday near the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem’s Old City who also burned posters of the Emirati crown prince, the Gaza demonstrators stopped short of burning symbols of the UAE — apparently not to antagonize the Gulf Arab country, where tens of thousands of Palestinians work and live.

The demonstrators in Gaza City also voiced support for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for his rejection of President Donald Trump’s Mideast plan, which the Palestinians say unfairly favors Israel.

The protest was organized by the militant Hamas group, which rules the Gaza Strip, and other factions. Khalil al-Hayya, a senior Hamas official, denounced the Israeli-Emirati deal. “Normalization with the occupation harms us

and doesn’t serve us,” he said. “Instead, it serves and promotes the occupation in its projects that target Palestine and the region.” In the West Bank town of Turmusaya, several dozen Palestinians demonstrated against the UAE’s deal with Israel, the Trump administration’s Mideast plan and Israel’s plan to annex parts of the West Bank. Protesters burned Israeli flags and threw stones at Israeli soldiers in the distance.

**The protest was organized by the militant Hamas group, which rules the Gaza Strip, and other factions.**

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## LOCKDOWN DEATHS IN INDIA IGNITE DEBATE ON POLICE BRUTALITY

August 17, 2020 | AP News

NEW DELHI — For two and a half minutes the popular Indian radio DJ described in graphic detail what she said was the torture and killing of a father and son in police custody.

The father was arrested for flouting coronavirus lockdown rules by keeping his mobile phone shop in southern India open past curfew, Suchitra Ramadurai alleged in a video posted to her Instagram. The man's son went to check on him at the police station and both were beaten so badly they were still bleed-

ing when they appeared before a judge the next day. Three days later, on June 23, they were both dead. "Please share this story," Ramadurai told her followers. "Let's fight the system."

The video, which was viewed 20 million times before police ordered Ramadurai to take it down, sparked an extraordinary groundswell of public outrage at the deaths with local opposition politicians marching in the streets, Bollywood stars voicing their condemnations and television stations holding hourlong...

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## TRUMP: US DEMANDS 'SNAPBACK' OF UN SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAN

August 19, 2020 | AP News

WASHINGTON — The United States will demand Thursday that all United Nations sanctions be re-imposed against Iran, President Donald Trump announced Wednesday, a move that follows America's embarrassing failure to extend an arms embargo against Tehran.

The administration's insistence on snapping back international sanctions against Iran sets the stage for a contentious dispute. It's possible that the U.S. call will be ignored by other U.N. members — an outcome that could call into question the U.N. Security Council's ability to enforce its own legally binding decisions. "Two years ago I withdrew the United States from the disastrous Iran nuclear deal, which...

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AP File

## EMBATTLED BELARUS LEADER JEERED BY WORKERS AS STRIKES GROW

August 17, 2020 | AP News

MINSK, Belarus — Workers heckled and jeered President Alexander Lukashenko on Monday as he visited a factory and strikes grew across Belarus, raising the pressure on the authoritarian leader to step down after 26 years in power.


On the ninth straight day of mass protests over the official results of the Aug. 9 presidential election that demonstrators say was rigged, Lukashenko flew by helicopter to a factory in the capital of Minsk to rally support, but he was met by angry workers chanting, "Go away!" He told the workers: "I will never cave in to pressure." Lukashenko said the country could have a new presidential election, but only after approving an amended version of its constitution — an...



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