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Democracy Dies in Darkness

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2025 • \$4

Bolsonaro convicted in Brazil coup plot

27-year sentence given; court finds ex-president sought to kill successor

BY MARINA DIAS

BRASÍLIA — Former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro was found guilty Thursday of attempting a military coup to stay in power after his 2022 election loss, a plot that included plans to assassinate President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and was sentenced to more than 27 years in prison in a case that has roiled this young democracy and strained its relations with President Donald Trump.

The 4-1 ruling by a panel of five justices of Brazil's Supreme Court made Bolsonaro the first former president convicted of trying to undermine Latin America's largest democracy. Advocates for accountability hoped the verdict would prove a turning point for a nation that has suffered more than a dozen coup attempts but historically has opted for political conciliation rather than prosecution. Trump, a Bolsonaro ally and friend, had imposed tariffs on Brazilian imports and sanctions on justices to pressure them to drop the case.

The former president and seven co-defendants were convicted of attempting a coup and four related charges.

Bolsonaro, 70, has denied wrongdoing. The right-wing populist did not attend the proceeding, which began last week in a building his supporters ransacked after his loss. In court, his attorney said there was no concrete evidence to link him to the plot to overturn the narrowest presidential election loss in Brazil's four decades of democracy. He is expected to appeal.

With the conclusion of voting Thursday evening, the justices turned to sentencing. Bolsonaro faced up to 40 years in prison.

Bolsonaro and his co-defenses

SEE BOLSONARO ON A11



Former President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil denies wrongdoing, and he is expected to appeal.

Manhunt intensifies for Kirk's killer



ERIC THAYER/GETTY IMAGES

The casket containing the body of slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk is removed from Air Force Two on Thursday in Phoenix.

Experts say colleges unprepared for security threats like Utah slaying

BY JOANNA SLATER, SUSAN SVRLUGA AND BRIANNA TUCKER

For Wednesday's midday event at Utah Valley University, conservative activist Charlie Kirk followed a formula he had used many times on college campuses.

Students flowed into a courtyard for a large outdoor gathering featuring a wide-ranging, sometimes raucous political debate, with security arrangements coordinated in advance between Kirk's team and campus police.

With a single shot fired from

the rooftop of a building more than 100 yards away, it all came crashing down.

Kirk's targeted killing added to an upsurge in political violence in the United States and represents a startling new type of risk for colleges and universities.

College campuses are all too familiar with the possibility of gun violence and have well-established protocols for responding to mass shootings. But experts struggled to recall any event in recent decades where a campus speaker at a university appears to

SEE SECURITY ON A4



CLEMENS BILAN/EPA/SHUTTERSTOCK

A candlelight vigil for Kirk is held Thursday in Berlin near the Brandenburg Gate in front of the U.S. Embassy.

Fear and foreboding as America enters a new age of political bloodshed

BY NAFTALI BENDAVID

A Minnesota state legislator killed in her home in June. The Pennsylvania governor's house set afire in April. Candidate Donald Trump facing two apparent assassination attempts during last year's campaign. And now conservative activist Charlie

Kirk gunned down and killed Wednesday during a talk at Utah Valley University, horrifying a live audience and those who saw the shooting online.

America is facing a new era of political violence reminiscent of some of its most bitter, tumultuous eras, including the 1960s, which saw the assassinations of

President John F. Kennedy, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

"We are going through what I call an era of violent populism," said Robert Pape, who heads the Chicago Project on Security and Threats at the University of Chicago. "It is a historically high era of assassination, assassination

attempts, violent protests, and it is occurring on both the right and the left."

He added: "This is way beyond the usual minor ebb and flow of militia group violence we have seen for 20 years. This is a different level, a different historical period of political violence,

SEE VIOLENCE ON A6

IMAGES SHARED OF POTENTIAL SHOOTER

Rifle, prints recovered as investigators chase clues

BY MARK BERMAN, PERRY STEIN AND JEREMY ROEBUCK

The sprawling search for a suspect in the killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk intensified on Thursday, as investigators in Utah circulated images of a person they called "the potential shooter" while poring over evidence and tips in the case.

As the search stretched through a second day, officials said they had made significant steps forward, but their ultimate goal — locating the attacker — still remained out of reach.

The FBI announced a \$100,000 reward in the case and pleaded with the public for help, even as the bureau's leaders and other officials faced increasing scrutiny over their public remarks and actions so far. Kash Patel, the FBI director, in particular drew criticism for his decision to say that someone had been taken into custody in the case, only for the person to go free a short time later.

Kirk, a close ally of President Donald Trump, was gunned down Wednesday during an appearance on the campus of Utah Valley University, a school about 40 miles south of Salt Lake City. The gruesome slaying, captured on widely shared video footage, horrified the worlds of politics and media, in which Kirk had been a high-profile figure.

Trump on Thursday called Kirk "a giant of his generation" and said he would posthumously award him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor.

Kirk's fatal shooting set off an expansive, high-pressure search in Utah, with a wide array of law enforcement officials casting an increasingly broad net to hunt down the person they say fired a single shot from a nearby rooftop before fleeing the campus.

Officials said they recovered a "high-powered, bolt action rifle" in a nearby wooded area. The public safety agency also said

SEE KIRK ON A4

Witness account: He was asking Kirk a question. A shot rang out. **A6**

Undeterred: Students at event say Kirk's killing won't silence them. **A7**

'Radical left': Trump lays blame, vows a crackdown on critics. **A8**

In a time of anxiety, kids board 'walking bus'

Three children watched ICE detain their dad. Now, D.C. neighbors escort them to school.

BY TEO ARMUS

Kevin paced back and forth on the curb outside his D.C. apartment building, waiting for the "walking school bus" of neighbors that would shuttle him to elementary school.

The "bus" — a procession of parents strolling with coffee mugs and clutching the hands of backpack-clad students — was the newest feature of the 10-year-old's morning routine. As the Trump administration targets residents who've entered the country illegally, filling some D.C. neighborhoods with anxiety, it was meant to offer a sense of security for children of immigrants like him.

Last year, Kevin and his younger brother and sister would make the short walk to school in their



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

This group forming a "walking school bus" escorts students to their elementary school in Northwest Washington on Aug. 29.

quiet, hilly neighborhood of row-houses with only their mom, Rossy.

But that was before federal immigration agents came up to their dad, who had a standing deportation order, put him in handcuffs and took him away in a gray truck — a scene last month that the three young siblings, all of whom were born in the United States, witnessed as their summer break was coming to a close.

A few days later, Kevin's uncle, who ICE officials say crossed the southern border illegally in 2023, left the apartment they shared to head to work and never came back. Rossy tearfully banged on the windows of their apartment out of grief, saying her brother had been taken to a U.S. Immigration

SEE WALKING BUS ON A20

Israel's Qatar strike muddles Trump's Gaza ceasefire plans

BY KAREN DEYOUNG AND SOUAD MEKHENNET

For much of the world, Israel's airstrike Tuesday in Qatar against Hamas officials negotiating over an end to the Gaza war was a dangerous and counterproductive act that has set back the prospects for peace and the release of what Israel says are 20 living hostages still held by Hamas.

In the Arab world, the strike was seen by many as a cynical move by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to scuttle ceasefire negotiations and extend the war to allow Israel the time and space to continue its offensive in Gaza.

Wider possible consequences include undermining President

Donald Trump's goal of building pro-U.S. regional integration through expansion of the Abraham Accords, the normalization agreements he brokered between Israel and four Arab states during his first term. In addition to Saudi Arabia and others in the Persian Gulf, the Trump administration has envisioned eventually adding Lebanon, Syria, Azerbaijan and more to the accords.

That "vision is under heavy strain," a senior Persian Gulf official said at a conference this week in Washington, where most participants spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe sensitive diplomacy. "This is a time when, after two years of war, we need to de-escalate. Many Israeli military operations have succeeded

SEE ISRAEL ON A13

IN THE NEWS

Russian drones An incursion this week into Poland's airspace is seen as a test by the Kremlin of NATO's readiness to defend its easternmost members. **A12**

Economic concerns rise Experts fear the U.S. could face stagflation as both inflation and jobless claims are increasing. **A15**

THE NATION **Nadine Menendez** was sentenced to 4½ years in a corruption scheme with husband Bob. **A2** **Justices** declined to reverse a ruling allowing a trans student's use of a school bathroom. **A9**

THE WORLD **China and Russia** signed more deals at a summit, but Xi kept the upper hand. **A10** **Seoul said** Trump offered to let South Korean detainees stay to train U.S. workers. **A14**

THE ECONOMY **Monthly mortgage** payments are the highest in decades as home-owner costs outpace inflation and median income stagnates. **A15** **Microsoft**, Paramount and NBCUniversal are the latest big companies to roll back work-from-home flexibility. **A16**

STYLE **Thousands of film** workers vowed not to work with Israeli film groups over concerns for Palestinians. **B1**

SPORTS **For the young** Nationals and their large appetites, learning what to eat and what not to eat can help fuel success. **B7**

THE REGION **Republicans** in the House advanced bills that would roll back D.C. home rule and overhaul the city's justice system. **B13** **The new 8000 Series** Metro railcars are being built at a new state-of-the-art Hitachi factory in Hagerstown. **B13**

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