



U.S. commandos capture Venezuelan leader

Israel welcomes move, while Iran, Russia sharply condemn it; Maduro and wife to face narco-terrorism charges in U.S.

The Associated Press, Reuters, DPA and Haaretz

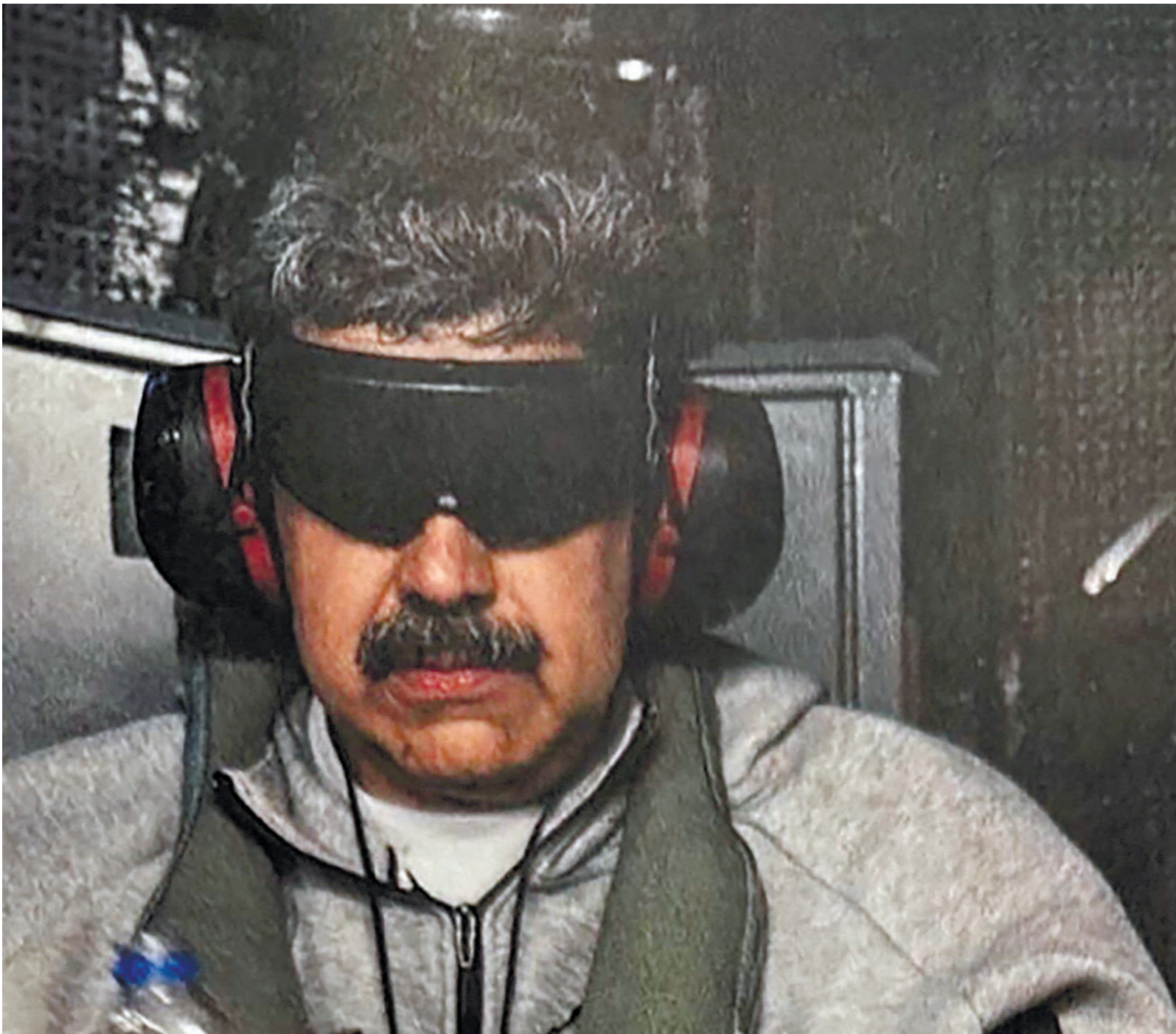
The United States captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and flew him out of the country in an extraordinary military operation early Saturday that plucked a sitting leader from office. President Donald Trump insisted the U.S. government would run the country at least temporarily and would tap Venezuela's vast oil reserves to sell "large amounts" to other countries.

The action marked the culmination of an escalating Trump administration pressure campaign on the South American country that consisted of months of strikes on boats officials said were smuggling drugs to the U.S. Behind the scenes, U.S. officials tracked Maduro's behavioral habits, including what he ate and where he slept, in preparing to execute an operation that resulted in one of the more stunning regime changes in modern history.

Maduro and his wife, seized overnight from their home on a military base, were aboard a U.S. warship on their way to New York, where they were to face criminal charges in connection with a Justice Department indictment accusing them of a role in narco-terrorism conspiracy.

Trump said the U.S. planned to run Venezuela until a transition of power can take place. He claimed the American presence was already in place, though there were no immediate signs the U.S. was running the country. Venezuelan state TV

See MADURO, Page 2



An image released by Trump that he said shows Maduro in U.S. custody aboard the USS Iwo Jima.

@realDonaldTrump/Reuters

Liza Rozovsky

Israel sees attack as blow to Iran axis

Israeli officials see Saturday's U.S. military attack on Venezuela as a blow to the Iranian axis, which has established itself in the country in recent decades, in part through Hezbollah and the Revolutionary Guards. Jerusalem views President Nicolás Maduro's regime as Iran's gateway to Latin America: The assessment is that Iranian-supported Hezbollah has a foothold in Venezuela and that senior Revolutionary Guards figures have acquired Venezuelan

citizenship, allowing them to move freely throughout South America and expand Iran's influence in the region.

Israeli officials believe Maduro's regime is not only hostile to Israel but also friendly toward Iran. His predecessor Hugo Chavez severed diplomatic relations with Jerusalem in 2009. The Islamic Republic has been one of Venezuela's main allies since the days

See AXIS, Page 2

Netanel Slymivics

Trump attack echoes familiar pattern

President Donald Trump broke the world order that the United States created and nurtured for 80 years. Democratic and Republican presidents invested a great effort in the wake of the two world wars to build agreements and international institutions to regulate international relations, economics, trade and health. Trump always thought that all these presidents were suckers. If he wants to attack Venezuela, why should

he ask the UN for permission?

The strike on the Venezuelan capital and the operation to capture the dictator Nicolás Maduro may have surprised many who weren't following the American president's exploits, but in practice it was the peak of a four-month campaign. On September 2, 2025, the U.S. Navy launched dozens of strikes against boats in the

See ECHO, Page 4



Barak's video address to protesters.

Itai Ron

Ex-top justice: Israel is no longer a liberal democracy

Bar Peleg, Eden Solomon and Adi Hashmonai

Israel is under the rule of a single individual and its system of government is no longer a liberal democracy, former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak said in a video message screened at an anti-government demonstration on Saturday.

Protests took place across

Israel on Saturday, with a central rally in Tel Aviv marking the third anniversary of Justice Minister Yariv Levin's speech launching the judicial overhaul.

"The court alone will not be able to prevent the judicial coup," Aharon stated in his recorded message to protesters. "Only the people – who stand at the center of liberal democracy – can stop

the deterioration."

For Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's control to be "absolute," the government must "take over the one body that can oversee the government: the judiciary," Barak stated.

"It is no wonder that the first stage of the constitutional revolution focused on appointing judges and their power to strike down

legislation and government actions," he said.

Barak also criticized the police, claiming that they "exercise their power in an unequal and unrestrained manner." He further addressed the issue of the exemption from military service, saying that the lack of enlistment of ultra-Orthodox men was a violation of civil rights.

He also pointed to what he described as "discrimination and violence against Arab society" as another example of "the way our rights as citizens are violated on a daily basis."

"I have spent my entire life in public service – I am not a person who speaks at rallies," Barak said. "I am speaking to you this evening because our life's work is in

danger – liberal democracy is growing weaker, unraveling and eroding."

Ruby Chen, father of slain hostage Staff Sgt. Itay Chen, whose body was abducted to Gaza and later returned to Israel, also spoke at the protest. He said that after being at the Knesset last week, he realized that "there is no

See PROTEST, Page 2

Sweeping rollbacks on first day in office

NYC Mayor Mamdani revokes BDS, synagogue protest bans

Etan Nechin

NEW YORK – On his first day in office, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani on Thursday overturned all the executive orders signed by his predecessor, Eric Adams, after September 26, 2024, the date that the outgoing mayor was indicted on five federal charges related to bribery, wire fraud and campaign finance offenses.

Among the canceled orders are the ban on protesting in front of synagogues, the ban on city employees cooperating with the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement and the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism.

Under the IHRA definition of antisemitism, claims that "the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor" deny the "Jewish people their right to self-determination." The IHRA definition is often criticized for conflating legitimate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Mamdani responded to criticism of his decision in a Friday press conference, where he said he was "proud to sign a number of execu-

tive orders that will give my administration a clean slate to get to work on delivering a new era for New Yorkers."

He said his administration "will be relentless in its efforts to combat hate and division," including "fighting the scourge of antisemitism by actually funding hate crime prevention, by

How we define antisemitism

Gallery, Page 8

celebrating our neighbors, and by practicing a politics of universality.

"Protecting Jewish New Yorkers is going to be a focus of my administration," he said. Regarding the IHRA's definition of antisemitism, Mamdani said that "a number of leading Jewish organizations have immense concerns around this definition, and what we will do is actually deliver on our commitment to protect Jewish New Yorkers."

The day before, in his first press conference after being inaugurated, Mamdani vowed to keep the newly

founded Office to Combat Antisemitism open.

The decision came as a surprise, as many had expected the incoming mayor to shut down the office opened in May. Critics have also dismissed the office as a campaign stunt by then-Mayor Eric Adams and questioned its effectiveness.

The Office to Combat Antisemitism is led by Moshe Davis, a former Jewish liaison for the Adams administration, and focuses on monitoring incidents, coordinating with law enforcement and advising on policies to curb hate crimes.

Mamdani took a public oath of office on Thursday outside City Hall, after being privately sworn in as mayor at midnight on New Year's Eve.

"I stand before you, moved by the privilege of taking this sacred oath, humbled by the faith that you have placed in me," Mamdani said in his address.

"New York belongs to all who live in it together. We will tell a new story of our city," he said. "The authors of this story will speak Pashto and Mandarin, Yiddish

See MAMDANI, Page 2

HAARETZ

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Leak threat Iranian hackers threaten to release data from former minister's phone



Mohammed Arafat/AP

Showing our ignorance Israeli media roasted Angelina Jolie for Rafah visit

haaretz.com

2026 could be great for Israel's economy – if Netanyahu lets it

David Rosenberg

As we step into the great unknown that is the year 2026, things do not look at all bad for the Israeli economy. This could be the first full year since 2019 entirely free of the external shocks of the coronavirus pandemic and war. Thus, the year ahead should be one of recovery and brisk growth.

Or not. Going into 2026, Israel faces not a few wild cards. At home, there's the risk of renewed fighting on any number of fronts and the risk of a nasty and divisive election campaign. Globally, the risks are elevated, first and foremost being a mercurial American president. So far, Donald Trump's attacks on world trade and globalization have not done serious damage, but we're only one year into a four-year presidency.

And, Trump isn't the only risk. France's political and financial crisis could reverberate across the eurozone, and China's attempt to export its way out of its economic woes risks ending badly. Surging artificial intelligence investment around the world risks turning into a dot.com bubble 2.0.



The Mahaneh Yehuda market during Israel's war with Iran over the summer.

Olivier Fitoussi

But let's start with the positive drivers, which have the upper hand because, unlike the negatives, they are already in place and doing their work.

On the upside: Resilience!

The most important of those is the remarkable resilience of Israel's economy in the face of seemingly endless shocks. It's a phe-

nomenon that became first evident after the second Lebanon war in 2006 and has persisted through umpteenth subsequent wars with Hamas, the Great Recession and the coronavirus. Each time economic activity took a big hit, only to claw back the losses soon after. Even during the two years of the Gaza war, the economy enjoyed mini-recoveries every time the fighting entered a lull, most notably the 12 per-

cent jump in GDP growth following last June's war with Iran.

Meanwhile, inflation is trending lower and has been inside the government's target range since August, allowing the Bank of Israel to make its first interest rate cut in two years in late November. If current trends continue, which a strong shekel should help along,

See 2026, Page 4