

# Official: 300 People Charged in U.S. Over Capitol Raid



Pro-Trump protesters storm into the U.S. Capitol during clashes with police, during a rally to contest the certification of the 2020 U.S. presidential election results by the U.S. Congress, in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- The U.S. Justice Department (DOJ) has charged over 300 people in connection with the deadly Jan. 6 Capitol riot by pro-Trump supporters, acting Deputy Attorney General John Carlin told reporters Friday.

The DOJ official said the investigations into those who attacked the Capitol were moving "at a speed and scale that's unprecedented, and rightly so." "Those responsible must be held to account, and they will be," he said, adding that at least 280 people have also been arrested in addition to the charges.

Carlin's announcement comes just

one day after Capitol Police Acting Chief Yogananda Pittman told lawmakers that "militia groups" present during the Jan. 6 attack have indicated they may try and "blow up" the building at some point in the future, when President Biden addresses Congress.

"We know that members of the militia groups that were present on Jan. 6 have stated their desires that they want to blow up the Capitol and kill as many members as possible with a direct nexus to the State of the Union, which we know that date has not been identified," Pittman told the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch Thursday.

A senior FBI official said the agency will be watching the threat "very closely for any reaction from individuals that would show either an intent to commit an attack or somebody that has already committed one."

The official said that domestic terrorism has become an increasing problem in the U.S. since 2019, which was the deadliest year in domestic terror attacks since the Oklahoma City Bombing in 1995.

Last year saw its fair share of violence, with 180 cases of domestic terrorism.

"The violent reaction to a mixture of events that took place around the country is unlike anything we have seen in decades," the FBI official said.

The deputy attorney general stressed the importance of "information sharing" and said it is a practice that helps security officials "collectively respond to present and emerging domestic threats."

But when pressed by Fox News about the apparent lack of communication between the FBI and Capitol Police in the lead up to the Jan. 6 attack, officials from the DOJ and FBI who were briefing reporters sidestepped the question.

"I will just say, we have processes in place for sharing information," the senior FBI official said. "We continue to grow our partnerships and the sharing of our information beyond state and local and federal partners."

## Kremlin: UK Waging 'Secret Information War' on Russia



People arrive and depart from Broadcasting House, the headquarters of the BBC, in London July 2, 2015.

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Leaked documents show the UK finances opposition media outlets, including the BBC, to "create conditions for regime change in Russia," the Kremlin says.

Earlier this month, hacker group Anonymous published documents that purportedly show Thomson Reuters and BBC Media Action foundations are involved in "a secret information war" against Russia.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Friday that London "finances and manually controls the operation of various media via intermediaries, and how it formed a network of influence agents in the Russian-language segment of social media."

Zakharova said Moscow was awaiting an explanation from London about the papers.

"According to the leaked documents, PR [foreign relations] agencies search for a new audience, promote content, make adjustments to the editorial policy and teach the staff the latest technologies for manipulating mass consciousness," she added.

Zakharova said the leaked papers are "confirmation" that former UK Prime Minister Theresa May's plan to give Russia the status of "a hostile state" is working.

Back in November 2017, the then prime minister announced plans to allocate \$139.65 million for that purpose.

The leaked files also exposed how Russian-language media outlets Meduza and MediaZona received illicit support from the UK government.

Earlier this week, Grayzone said on Twitter that Amnesty International had rescinded imprisoned Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny's "prisoner of conscience" characterization on the basis he previously "advocated violence and discrimination and has not retracted such statements."

Shortly after, Mediazona published an extraordinary exclusive translated by Latvia-based website Meduza that claimed the decision by Amnesty resulted from a Kremlin-orchestrated "campaign."

Amnesty International, however, unambiguously dismissed any suggestions its decision was in "response to external pressure," describing them as "untrue."

"Amnesty decided to re-examine the case and conducted a thorough review of the evidence base," said the organization.

"After painstaking consideration, we concluded that we had made a mistake in our initial determination," it added.

## Tens of Thousands Rally in Tunisia to Back Ennahda



Supporters of Tunisia's biggest political party, Ennahda, march during a rally in opposition to President Kais Saied in Tunis on February 27, 2021.

TUNIS (Middle East Eye) -- Tunisia's biggest political party, Ennahda, rallied tens of thousands of supporters in the capital on Saturday in a show of strength amid a dispute between the president and prime minister.

In the biggest demonstration in Tunisia in years, Ennahda supporters poured into the centre of Tunis on 27 February from across the country, chanting "the people want to protect institutions" and "the people want national unity".

The moderate Islamic party, led by Parliament Speaker Rached Ghannouchi, has backed Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi in his standoff with President Kais Saied over

a cabinet reshuffle which has paralyzed the government.

The dispute has brought to a head months of wrangling between the three men in Tunisia's latest political crisis since a 2019 election delivered a fragmented parliament while propelling Saied, an independent, to the presidency.

The government crisis comes as Tunisia's economic crisis, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, has sparked rapid inflation and high youth unemployment, which has led many people to leave the North African country.

Saied nominated Mechichi as prime minister last summer when the government collapsed after only five

months in office, but the two men soon fell out.

Mechichi then turned for support to the two biggest parties in parliament - Ennahda and Heart of Tunisia, led by jailed media mogul Nabil Karoui.

Last month, Mechichi changed 11 ministers in a reshuffle seen as replacing allies of Saied with those of Ennahda and Heart of Tunisia. The president, however, has refused to swear in four of them, saying they had conflicts of interest.

Meanwhile, during protests last month over inequality and police abuses, demonstrators focused most of their anger against Mechichi and Ennahda.

While Ennahda has labeled its march as being "in support of democracy," it is widely seen as an effort to mobilize popular backing against Saied, raising fears of competing protest movements that could lead to polarization or violence.

Despite a number of democratic elections since the 2011 removal of longtime president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, protests have continued to break out, especially in the central and southern regions, where youth joblessness has reached 30 percent and the poverty level is above 20 percent.

In 2020 alone, the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights recorded 6,500 protests, all of which were motivated by economic, social and environmental demands.

## Myanmar Begins Most Sweeping Crackdown on Protests

NAYPYITAW (Reuters) -- Police launched their most sweeping crackdown in three weeks of protests against military rule on Saturday in towns and cities across Myanmar, and one woman was shot and wounded and dozens of people were detained.

Three domestic media outlets said earlier that the woman shot in the central town of Monywa had died but an ambulance service official said she was in hospital. The circumstances of the shooting were not clear and police were not available for comment.

The violence came after Myanmar's UN envoy, saying he was speaking for the ousted civilian government, urged the United Nations to use "any means necessary" to reverse the Feb. 1 coup.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized power and detained Aung San Suu Kyi and much of her party leadership, alleging fraud in a November election her party won in a landslide.

The coup, which stalled Myanmar's progress toward democracy, has brought hundreds of thousands of protesters onto the streets and drawn condemnation from Western countries, with some imposing limited sanctions.

Police were out in force in cities and towns from early on Saturday in their most determined effort yet to stamp out the protests.

usual protest sites and detained people as they congregated, witnesses said. Several journalists were detained, their media organizations and colleagues said.

Confrontations developed as more people came out despite the police operation.

Crowds chanted and sang then scattered into side streets and buildings as police advanced, firing tear gas, setting off stun grenades and shooting guns into the air, witnesses said.

Some protesters threw up barricades across streets. Crowds eventually thinned but police in Yangon were still chasing groups and firing into the air in the late afternoon, witnesses said. Police detained numerous people through the day and set upon some with clubs.

Similar scenes played out in the second city of Mandalay and other towns, witnesses and media said. Among those detained in Mandalay was Win Mya Mya, one of two Muslim members of parliament for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), media said.

Aye Aye Tint, a protester in the central town of Monywa said police had fired water cannon as they surrounded a crowd.

Junta leader General Min Aung Hlaing has said authorities have been using minimal force. Nevertheless, at least three protesters have died over the days of turmoil. The army says a policeman was killed in earlier violence.

## Nigeria Launches Search for Over 300 Missing Girls



A piece of cloth belonging to one of the students is seen on the ground after gunmen attacked and abducted students and teachers from the Government Science College in Kagara, Niger state.

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (Reuters) -- Gunmen in Nigeria on Saturday released 27 teenage boys who were kidnapped from their school last week in the northern state of Niger, while security forces continued to search for more than 300 schoolgirls abducted in a nearby state.

Schools have become targets for mass kidnappings for ransom in northern Nigeria by armed groups, many of whom carry guns and ride motorcycles.

On Feb. 17, 27 students, three staff and 12 members of their families were abducted by an armed gang who stormed the Government Science secondary school in the Kagara district of Niger state, overwhelming the school's security detail. One boy was killed during the raid.

After their release, boys were seen by a Reuters witness walking with armed security through a dusty village, some struggling to stand and asking for water. A government official said the boys were aged between 15 and 18.

The release of the schoolboys comes just a day after the raid on a school in Zamfara state where gunmen seized 317 girls.

"As we welcome the news of the release of the abducted Kagara students, I urge

government to expedite action on the release and safe return of the kidnapped students of Government Girls Secondary School Jangebe," Peter Hawkins, UNICEF's Nigeria representative, said.

The recent attacks have raised concern about rising violence by armed gangs and takfiri insurgents. Takfiri group Boko Haram carries out abductions in Nigeria's turbulent northeast, as does a branch of Islamic State.

The unrest has become a political problem for President Muhammadu Buhari, a retired general and former military ruler who has faced mounting criticism in recent months over high profile attacks by the gangs known locally as "bandits".

Buhari replaced his long-standing military chiefs this month amid worsening violence in Nigeria.

In December, gunmen raided a school in northwestern Katsina state and kidnapped nearly 350 boys, who were subsequently rescued by security forces.

Violence and insecurity have compounded the economic challenges faced by citizens in Africa's most populous country and top oil exporter, which is struggling to cope with a fall in revenues due to a slump in crude prices in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### News in Brief

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- Armenian President Armen Sarkissian has refused to fire the head of the general staff of the country's armed forces after he was dismissed by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, the presidential office said on Saturday. Pashinyan dismissed the head of the general staff Onik Gasparyan on Thursday after what he had called an attempted coup to remove him, but the move had to be signed off by the president. According to the president's statement, posted on the presidential office website, the move to dismiss Gasparyan was unconstitutional. The army has called for the resignation of Pashinyan and his government after what critics say was the disastrous handling of a bloody six-week conflict between Azerbaijan and ethnic Armenian forces over the Azerbaijani region of Nagorno-Karabakh last year.

CARTAGENA, Spain (Reuters) -- More than 850 cows that spent months aboard a ship wandering across the Mediterranean are not fit for transport anymore and should be killed, according to a confidential report by Spanish government veterinarians seen by Reuters. The cows were kept in what an animal rights activist called "hellish" conditions on the Karim Allah, which docked in the southeastern Spanish port of Cartagena on Thursday after struggling to find a buyer for the cattle during the past two months. The beasts were rejected by several countries over fears they had bovine bluetongue virus. The insect-borne virus causes lameness and hemorrhaging among cattle. Bluetongue does not affect humans. The veterinarians' report concluded that the animals had suffered from the lengthy journey. Some of them were unwell and not fit for transport outside of the European Union, nor should they be allowed in the EU. Euthanasia would be the best solution for their health and welfare, it said. The report did not say if the cattle had bluetongue disease.

DHAKA (Reuters) -- Bangladesh is under "no obligation" to shelter 81 Rohingya Muslim refugees adrift for almost two weeks on the Andaman Sea and being assisted by neighboring India, said Bangladesh foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen. India's coast guard found the 81 survivors and eight dead crammed onto a crippled fishing boat and were trying to arrange for Bangladesh to take them, Indian officials said on Friday. But Momen told Reuters late on Friday that Bangladesh expects India, the closest country, or Myanmar, the Rohingyas' country of origin, to accept them. More than 1 million Rohingya refugees from predominantly Buddhist Myanmar are living in teeming camps in Muslim-majority Bangladesh, including tens of thousands who fled after Myanmar's military conducted a deadly crackdown in 2017. Traffickers often lure Rohingya refugees with promises of work in Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia.

WELLINGTON (Reuters) -- New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Saturday that the country's biggest city, Auckland, will go into a seven-day lockdown from early morning on Sunday after a new local case of the coronavirus of unknown origin emerged. This comes two weeks after Auckland's nearly 2 million residents were plunged into a snap three-day lockdown when a family of three were diagnosed with the more transmissible UK variant of the new coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Health officials, who could not immediately confirm how the person got infected, said genome sequencing of the new infection was under way. The patient developed symptoms on Tuesday and is regarded as having been potentially infectious since Sunday, officials said. The person has visited several public venues during that period.

DENVER (Reuters) -- An avowed white supremacist was sentenced on Friday to 19-1/2 years in prison after pleading guilty months ago to a federal hate-crimes case stemming from a botched plot to bomb a historic Colorado synagogue in 2019. Richard Holzer, 28, appeared in a federal courtroom in Denver for a sentencing that capped an undercover FBI investigation of a plan to blow up Temple Emanuel in Pueblo, Colorado, the second-oldest synagogue in the state. Although the plot was thwarted, U.S. District Judge Raymond Moore said Holzer had sought "to terrorize the Jewish community" of Pueblo, a city of 112,000 residents about 100 miles south of Denver. "It is one of the most vulgar ... evil crimes that can be committed against an entire group of people," Moore said while imposing the sentence sought by prosecutors. Holzer, who lived in Pueblo, was arrested in November 2019 following an undercover sting by federal agents tracking his social media postings, in which he professed a hatred of Jews, according to an FBI arrest warrant affidavit.

ROME (Reuters) -- Archaeologists have unearthed a unique ancient-Roman ceremonial carriage from a villa just outside Pompeii, the city buried in a volcanic eruption in 79 AD. The almost perfectly preserved four-wheeled carriage made of iron, bronze and tin was found near the stables of an ancient villa at Civita Giuliana, around 700 metres (yards) north of the walls of ancient Pompeii. Massimo Osanna, the outgoing director of the Pompeii archaeological site, said the carriage was the first of its kind discovered in the area, which had so far yielded functional vehicles used for transport and work, but not for ceremonies. The culture ministry called it "a unique find, without any precedent in Italy". Pompeii, 23 km (14 miles) southeast of Naples, was home to about 13,000 people when it was buried under ash, pumice pebbles and dust as it endured the force of an eruption equivalent to many atomic bombs.