

The HuMannitarian

Volume 3



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Reader,

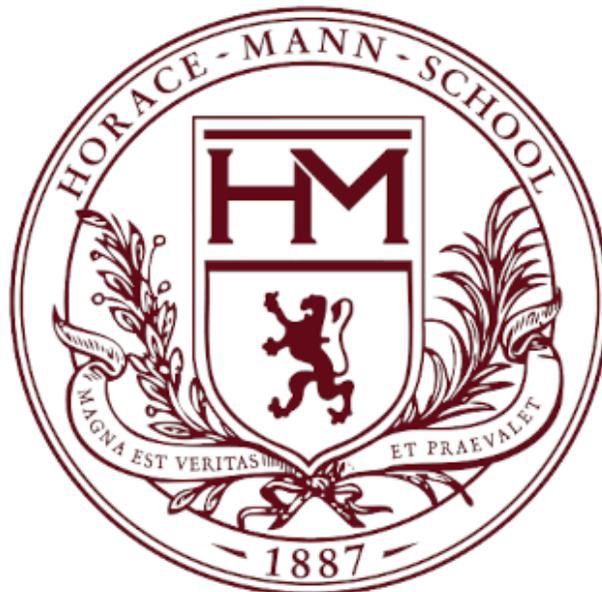
Welcome to the third edition of The HuMannitarian, Horace Mann's Human Rights publication! We are ecstatic to be able to honor all of our contributors' efforts in making this publication a reality.

We aim to focus on recent humanitarian challenges that have affected a variety of individuals around the world in this edition of The HuManitarian. From international crises like those in the Middle East to domestic crises like the California Wildfires, The HuMannitarian aims to raise consciousness of the injustices that many innocent people experience around the world.

This edition's feature piece is by James Kapadia (2025). A compelling story about the Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza. Give it a read!!

We'd like to thank all of our writers and artists for providing us with relevant documentation of these human rights situations, and we appreciate all of their hard work on this publication. We are especially grateful to Dr. Wendy Steiner and Dr. Alicia DeMaio, who have served as exceptional advisors and mentors. Their guidance and support over the past few years has been invaluable. Your commitment, support, and dedication have profoundly impacted us, and we are deeply appreciative of all your efforts. As we prepare to embark on our college journeys, we hope The HuMannitarian can continue to bring to light crucial information about worldwide events. This publication will always be a manifestation of our constant focus on fact based articles that stray away from the bias and opinion we so frequently see muddy discussion on human rights issues. The HuMannitarian means the world to the two of us and it would not have been possible without the HM community's hard work. Thank you for giving us this experience!

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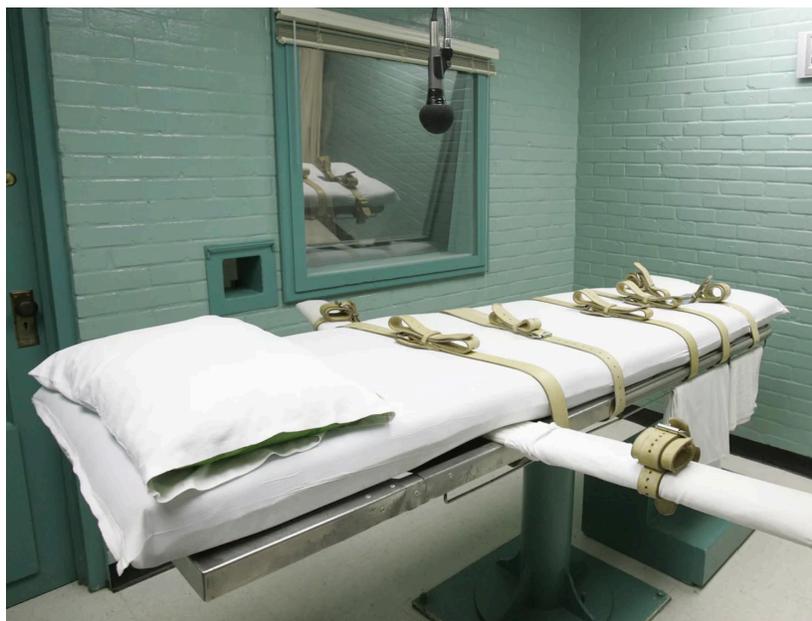
“SO LONG AS THEY DIE”: THE U.S. DEATH PENALTY

ALBERT LEE

On January 26, 2024, Kenneth Eugene Smith, a convicted murderer, was put to death (for a second time after a first botched execution) using nitrogen gas after a traumatic 22 minutes according to a witness. His execution came after the petition to the court to hear the case *Smith v. Hamm* and the request for a stay of execution were both denied by the Supreme Court. It marked the first time in American history that nitrogen gas, a new and previously untested method, was used to carry out an execution.

This is just one case out of the 1583 people executed in the US since 1976. While executions have significantly declined by over 75% since its peak in 1999, when 98 executions were carried out, still, 2023 saw 24 executions — primarily concentrated in 5 states: Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Alabama. Putting aside the many issues of the criminal justice system and appeals system, this article will primarily examine how we execute those who are sentenced. Methods of executions have widely varied throughout US history ranging from firing squad to electric chair; however, since the turn of the century, lethal injection has been by far the most common.

In 1997, Oklahoma was the first state to adopt lethal injection into the protocol as it was advocated by proponents to be more cost-effective and humane than the most common methods of execution at the time. Five years later, Texas became the first state to execute by lethal injection. By the year 1990, half of all executions were carried out by lethal injection. Now, that number has risen to nine out of every ten executions on average being carried out using this method.



Lethal injection procedures vary from state to state; nevertheless, the fundamental protocols are generally consistent nationwide. Administered (usually) without the involvement of a medical professional, the procedure usually begins with the injection of an anesthetic such as sodium thiopental or midazolam, which seeks to render the inmate unconscious within 20 seconds.

Subsequently, a paralytic, usually pancuronium bromide, is injected to induce paralysis within voluntary muscles. Finally, the third and last drug to be injected, typically potassium chloride, seeks to induce cardiac arrest in the inmate. While this three-step procedure has been the most common since the 1970s, states have also used two-step and one-step protocols.

Despite being considered a humane form of execution by many proponents of the death penalty, this viewpoint faces strong opposition from opponents, justices, and human rights organizations. When the procedures were being drafted over four decades ago, they were said by many involved to be “created with minimal expertise and little deliberation,” and then “adopted unquestioningly by state officials,” most of whom have little to no medical experience. This fact has led many to have concerns over the “experimental” nature of the procedures, as there are no concrete procedures or evidence proving its humaneness. Many doctors and critics point out that the first two injections, which are there to prevent the inmate from feeling pain, often fail at their purpose, “mask any pain and suffering endured by the inmate” — only making it painless for those watching. Additionally, on average 35% of all executions by lethal injection every year are botched resulting in a procedure that should take mere minutes lasting hours or failing to kill the inmate. Of all those executed, an average of 84% showed evidence of pulmonary edema, a build-up of fluid in the lung that creates a feeling that experts have likened to the feeling of being waterboarded.

Even the newest and most “modern” method of execution, nitrogen gas which was posed as even more humane than lethal injection, poses many risks that were brought to light even before the first execution by that means ever took place. Executions using nitrogen gas rely on the inmate being delivered 100% nitrogen gas which would “result in hypoxemia, eventual end-organ damage, and ultimately death”. With the new protocols in Alabama, many experts say that there is “not an abundant body of literature” or cases to allow for “concrete scientific conclusions” about the outcome of such procedures. Such uncertainty can be seen in the discrepancies between testimonies in the case *Smith v. Hamm* and the actual execution. During the proceedings, experts declared that in their opinion, the procedure would render the patient unconscious within 30-45 seconds and would result in death within 10-15 minutes after the nitrogen started flowing. However, according to a witness to the execution, “For four minutes, he was gasping for air. He appeared to be conscious. He was convulsing, he was writhing, the gurney was shaking noticeably”. In this case, the use of nitrogen gas as a means of execution and the outcome resulting from it has amounted to experimentation and “nothing short of State-sanctioned torture” by human rights and UN experts.

It is now where we are at a crucial point in time, where we must decide as a society whether we should continue to carry out the death penalty in new and more “modern” forms or if it is time to say that, in the words of Justice Harry Blackmun, “the death penalty experiment has failed.”

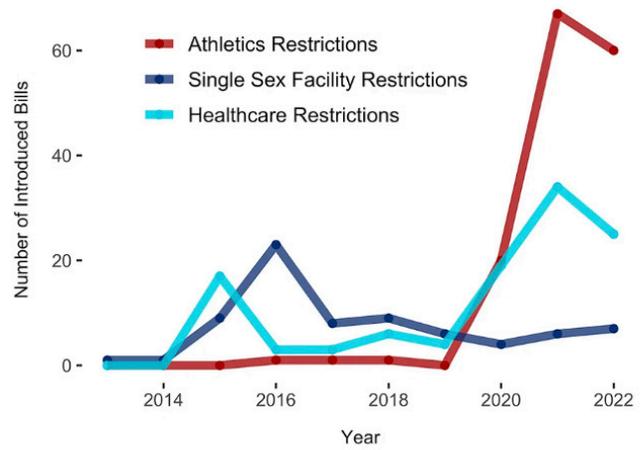
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY ANTI-TRANS BILLS BEING PASSED?

AMARIS CHRISTIAN

In 1966 the case *Matter of Anonymous v. Weiner* — the first case to acknowledge transgender identity in the US — was heard, and it concerned a transgender person who underwent sex reassignment surgery and wanted to change their name and sex on their birth certificate legally. The case was given to the New York City Health Department to give the court clearer guidelines on what authorizes a legal change of sex in the U.S. The NYCHD would later deny the person’s request, and the court would affirm the New York City and New Jersey Health Code which only granted a legal sex change if the recorded sex at the person’s time of birth was incorrectly reported. Later in 1993, Bill Clinton established his “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy which allowed LGBT people to join the military, but prohibited them from coming out or expressing anything about their identity; Clinton claimed LGBT people could now “fly under the radar”. To close the 20th century off, Clinton would then sign the Defense of Marriage Act which refused to recognize a non-heterosexual marriage. Now in 2024, Ohio has passed the Saving Adolescents from Experimentation Act (SAFE), which denies minors access to gender-affirming care or gender transition surgery. It is evident that Anti-Trans and LGBT laws have helped maintain a societal perception of alienation for transgender people. In addition, the 85 Anti-Trans bills passed in 2023 alone have erupted in a controversial national debate of whether or not the law should protect transgender people in health care, sports, educational settings, marriage, and even bathrooms. The lingering question remains: “What is so unique about

the 21st century that we have passed so many anti-trans bills?” How did we get here?

Waves of Anti-Transgender Bills in the US



Data compiled from Human Rights Campaign and American Civil Liberties Union, as of April 2022.

While George W. Bush pushed to eradicate legal same-sex marriage and relations, once elected, President Barack Obama granted the LGBT community a grand amount of legal freedom and care. On September 17, 1998, police entered John Lawrence’s apartment and saw him and Tyron Garner engaging in a consensual sexual act, leading them to arrest and convict both men for violating anti-sodomy statutes in the state of Texas. The then 2003 landmark case *Lawrence v. Texas* would have a 6 - 3 decision in favor of Lawrence, and overturn all state sodomy laws prohibiting non-heterosexual sexual acts. Despite that, Bush called for an amendment banning gay marriage stating that the marriage of a man and a woman needed to be preserved in the U.S.; however, his efforts were unsuccessful. Nowhere in Bush’s push to preserve heterosexual marriage and ban gay marriage was there a thought about trans people, as their identity only further challenged the rigid gender binary Bush wanted to maintain. January 20, 2009, Obama was elected; that same year, he signed a proclamation establishing June as national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender pride month, and signed into law the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Prevention Act,

which expanded the existing U.S. federal hate crime law to include sexual orientation and gender identity. In 2011, the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy would be repealed, allowing LGBT people to openly join the military without concealing their gender identity or sexuality. 2015, of course, welcomed the well-awaited legalization of gay marriage and a requirement for insurance companies to cover transition-related healthcare. So with all of this pro-LGBT legal action, where are these new anti-trans laws stemming from? Well, oddly enough, they began in the bathroom.

Although not enforced, the 2013 proposed “Bathroom Bill” — a bill that denied gender non-conforming or transgender people access to bathrooms outside of their assigned sex at birth — would jumpstart societal fear and repulsion towards transgender people leading to the enforcement of many anti-trans bills. Many conservatives argue that preventing transgender and non-conforming people from accessing the bathrooms they prefer grants cisgender people security and protection from sexual harassment or sexual predators who may use being transgender as an excuse; this fear is not supported. This argument invalidates transgender people’s gender identity by associating them with this predatory behavior and essentially portraying them as a threat to people’s safety. Interestingly, in 2016, South Carolina passed a bill that prohibited transgender athletes from participating in sports such that they could only play for the sex given on their birth certificate. Many argued that having this more fluid approach to sports would pose unfair advantages to transgender athletes who were assigned male at birth and disadvantages for those assigned female at birth. The next year the first bill to prohibit insurance companies from covering gender-affirming care for transgender youth would be introduced in

New Hampshire; this bill prohibited hormone replacement therapy and gender reassignment surgery. Then in 2018, the war on bathrooms would re-emerge when the Department of Education announced that they would not cover civil cases of discrimination against transgender students being denied access to facilities, such as bathrooms, that are consistent with their gender identity. Just a few months later transgender people were prohibited in the military, and by 2020 the DOE banned transgender athletes from sports. In 2021 there were 125 anti-trans bills introduced and 18 of them were passed. However, there were over 80 anti-trans bills passed in 2023 alone, why?



A vast majority of last year’s record number amount of anti-trans bills passed reflect denial of gender-affirming for youth as many claim that letting children decide if they want to undergo hormone replacement therapy and/or reassignment surgeries is dangerous; there is continuous belief that the children will live on to regret their decisions. However, studies among transgender populations in Europe, the U.S., and Canada have recorded less than one percent of people who underwent gender-reaffirming surgery and expressed regret. As we go into 2024 and around 35% of trans youth live in states that ban gender-affirming care and restrict trans youth from sports it’s important to consider whether or not the amount or existence of any of these anti-trans are warranted.

CALIFORNIA'S BATTLE AGAINST WILDFIRE FURY

SHANAYA PARIKH



What are wildfires?

There are several things about this rapidly changing environment that experts know about California fires: the unpredictable nature of wildfires caused by climate change, their inevitable growth in size, and the occurrence of new fires every time. An unsettling number of lives and property are being lost by Californians. Currently, there is always a risk of wildfires in California, especially during years of severe drought that leave the state's plants flammable. As the weather gets drier and warmer, most fires happen between April and October. Specifically, in October and November, the hot, dry winds of Southern California heighten the risk of wildfires. In Northern California, the busiest fire season often starts in June or July and lasts until late October or early November. Contrary to popular belief, July and August are not the most dangerous months for fires in California; in fact, fires that do occur in September and October tend to be far more destructive and burn through a much larger area. As wildfires spread throughout the terrain, they demolish homes, structures, and infrastructure, including power lines and water pumps. The National Interagency Fire Center reports that 60 sizable wildfires are raging across 14 states in the United States at the moment, consuming over 1.6 million acres of land. The August Complex Fire in 2020, which scorched over a million acres, was the largest wildfire in California history.

How do they start?

These wildfires in California originate for a variety of reasons, five of which are listed here. The first is that California wildfire frequency and intensity have grown recently due to megadroughts

and rising temperatures exacerbated by climate change. Seasons are getting warmer and drier due to climate change, which is perfect for flames. The area that California wildfires burn annually has risen since 1950 in tandem with rising temperatures. Second, not including the almost 2 million acres lost to failing power company infrastructure, since 2008, wildfires started by lightning strikes have devastated nearly 7 million acres of land. These are followed by 2.7 million acres lost due to human causes. Lightning strikes combined with extremely dry weather can result in a situation similar to the 2020 fire siege, which was the most devastating fire year in state history in terms of acres destroyed. Human activity is responsible for about 90% of wildfires, which can be caused by arson, downed power lines, abandoned cigarettes, car accidents, defective equipment, or neglected campfires. Lastly, power companies—like PG&E—can start destructive wildfires by failing to maintain their equipment for power transmission and distribution or by having power lines come down during inclement weather. One instance of this occurred during the 2018 Camp Fire, which was determined to be caused by PG&E and was the deadliest and most damaging fire in state history.

What are the effects of these fires on people?

Extreme fires are becoming more of a dangerous threat to our woods, homes, air quality, and climate goals, as well as human health and safety. These high-risk zones are home to almost 25 percent of the state's population. Extreme fire smoke damages people's quality of life and has a detrimental effect on public health since it spreads over large distances and into metropolitan areas. Wildfires have an impact on children because they might separate them from their families, friends, schools, and houses. A child born in 2020 has double the chance of a wildfire on average compared to a youngster born in 1960. Since children's immune systems are still developing, inhaling smoke from wildfires can have long-lasting health repercussions, like infections and allergies, because of how it affects their rapidly expanding bodies. The deadliest fire year in California's history was in 2018, which claimed many lives. More people in California are at risk from the state's larger, more frequent fires; in 2018, the town of Paradise in Northern California was completely destroyed by fire, leaving almost 90 people dead. The impacts of wildfires, which can burn throats and cause stinging eyes and severe coughing, can be spread hundreds of miles by the wind. Residents are warned by local air distances to use masks and refrain from exercising outside.

What are the effects of the fires on the environment?

The average size and temperature of California fires are rising faster than they have in the past, and a fourth of the state—more than 25 million acres—is currently categorized as having an extremely high or extreme fire threat. Climate change pushed away the region's protective layer of fog and mist, causing catastrophic flames to rip through lush, moist rainforests in California, the state's so-called "asbestos forests," which had lost their immunity. More than 163 million trees are killed by insects or drought as a result of lightning storms, which are erratic and extremely violent. The trees are already fragile and dry. A year's worth of carbon-reduction efforts can be undone by the smoke produced by large fires. Pollutant emissions from a single wildfire can outweigh those from millions of automobiles. Furthermore, the extraordinary capacity of healthy trees to absorb carbon from the atmosphere is lost as more trees die, taking away another weap-

on in the fight against climate change. If the trees burn, that process is reversed. Black carbon, a potent pollutant, is released by burning trees. The loss of forests can have a variety of water-related implications since they are watersheds that are essential to California's water supply. The system stores and purifies water, nourishes streams, and rivers, sustains fish and other species, and stabilizes hillsides that burn up when wildfires rampage over California's mountains. Trees store water in their branches, roots, and soil, which they then use to pull water from subterranean aquifers to use as a drinking source. Water is filtered and cleaned by meadows on lower elevations. After fires, the loss of trees causes soil erosion and clogs streams with runoff. Unstable hills may use mudslides and landslides to endanger public safety.



A FIGHT FOR HUMANITARIAN EQUITY IN YEMEN

SARINA SHAH

Throughout developing countries, women and children face the largest gap regarding humanitarian action due to sexual violence and lack of sanitary resources. The Norwegian Refugee Council found that women were 3 times more likely to live in inadequate shelters, not being able to claim housing. Due to this lack of security, women are 10 times more likely to face gender based violence. Detrimentially, research has shown that deprivation of sanitary resources results in a heavy toll on education, income, and physical and mental health.



This situation can be mirrored in Yemen. Since 2014, Yemen has experienced conflict, leaving 21.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with the majority being women and children. Being one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world, civil conflict has severely damaged WASH (water sanitation and hygiene) services and proxy breakouts have caused thousands to be pushed into poverty. For instance, across Yemen, 46% of all health facilities are only partially functioning or completely out of service due to shortages of staff, funds, electricity, medicines, and equipment. The lack of infrastructure disproportionately affects young women from accessing proper sanitary care, perpetuating the spread of dis-

ease such as cholera and measles. Specifically, in Shafa, residents didn't have access to safe water, with the closest source being about 2 km away. Pregnant women, the most common makers of this journey, faced insurmountable challenges as they had to walk long distances carrying gallons of water. The disruption of healthcare services makes it extremely difficult for women to access prenatal care, and compounds the risks associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Specifically, Yemen has one of the highest maternal death rates in the region, as one Yemeni woman dies in childbirth every two hours from preventable causes

However, the example of Shafa isn't unique. In Al Ahad, a tiny village 190 km south of the capital, residents have never had a toilet in their home. Open defecation is common among men, but for women, it strips them of their dignity. As a result, women and girls prefer to wait until dark to do so -- exposing them to predators and rampant disease. As women and girls face challenges during menstruation, their reproductive health takes a stark turn and makes them more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Additionally, using unhygienic materials increases the risk of infections, reproductive health issues and complications. The stress and discomfort associated with inadequate menstrual hygiene contributes to overall physical and mental strain experienced by women in the environment. However, not on this, but lack of sanitary resources also has larger implications for female adolescents' life as it necessitates for young girls to miss school during menstruation due to the unavailability of adequate facilities. This in turn contributes to higher dropout rates among girls and perpetuates both gender disparities in education and leaves them with fewer chances to earn money without an education.

Nevertheless, the root of the issue comes from a lack of structural awareness. Young girls in poverty-stricken countries are taught stigma behind their menstrual cycles, refraining themselves from seeing their bodies as natural. The topic of menstruation is seen as taboo, resulting in women feeling ashamed and embarrassed to discuss their needs openly -- with no structural change occurring. As a result, this inequality perpetuates a system of domesticity, in which women are taught to perform "home-based" tasks. In fact, a new law in Yemen called "Mahram" restricts women from even travelling without a male partner. A shrinking space for girls' education in areas controlled by conservatives and extremists contributes to this phenomenon in which women are only further marginalized.

In the past, UN initiatives have not proven to ameliorate the situation, as only 4 percent of UN targeted humanitarian projects were specifically targeted at women and girls. However, as grassroots organisations in other developing nations emerge, they provide momentum for the humanitarian situation in Yemen. For instance, in Jordan, Syrian refugees in the Zaatari refugee camp are increasing wages, improving diets, and improving the household situations for women. Throughout this ongoing Ebola epidemic, there are informational radio programmes and UN women facilitated training to adopt new strategies to help and cope with the local and nationwide effects of Ebola on women. In Yemen specifically, a new movement powered by UN women is working to level the playing field for women. Through the UNDP strategic plan from 2022-2025, advocates are working on increasing the number of female restrooms for women in poverty stricken towns, providing free pads and tampons to those in need. These initiatives demonstrate that providing personalized care is possible with adequate planning.



The basis of this humanitarian gender gap is a lack of distribution and a lack of knowledge from individuals who aren't firsthand experiencing the situation. Data education and accounting for the inequalities women experience are extremely crucial, as it allows us to better allocate funding and resources to where it is necessary. With Yemen as an example, humanitarian aid isn't a one size fits all solution -- we need to tailor our current solu-

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS: THE ISSUE WITH DRUG ENFORCEMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES

CHARLIE DAVIS

The Philippines has had a consistent methamphetamine and marijuana problem, with most drug users ranging from 16-64. While this had been a consistent problem for over 50 years, little had been done by 2015. This all changed after the presidential election of 2016. Rodrigo Duterte, former mayor and a representative of Davao in the Philippines House of Representatives, believed he was ready to take on the Philippines, and eliminate the nation's drug problem. On paper, this claim seems fair; Duterte had transformed Davao City from a "haven of lawlessness into one of the safest areas in Southeast Asia." Unfortunately, voters seemingly overlooked his violent track record. In President Duterte's reign, over 20,000 people are believed to have been killed extrajudicially through Duterte's crackdown. While strong enforcement policies were certainly needed for such a rampant drug problem, per-

haps former President Duterte pushed it too far.



The DDB (the official government agency designated to create policies on illegal drugs in the Philippines) reported in 2019 that there are 1.8 million drug users currently, with 4.8 million Filipinos reporting that they had used illegal drugs at least once in their lives. These numbers then tell us that 80% of these drug users have at least a high-school level education, along with 67% of these people being employed as well. These drug users are not outcasts of society; rather they are a real part of Philippine citizenry.

In a central Manila rally, former President Duterte has been quoted as saying, "Find them [anybody involved with drugs] all and arrest them. If they resist, kill them all." He continued by saying "Go

ahead and charge me with murder, so I could also kill you." He had also pledged earlier to kill 100,000 criminals and dump them into Manila Bay so that the "fish will grow fat" from feeding on them. It is safe to say that President Duterte has followed through on his first declaration. Police officers have been ordered to arrest and detain any men, women, or children based on pure suspicion of any drug involvement and/or criminal record. If these suspects decide to resist, police are allowed to kill with no repercussions. While international human-rights groups took notice of these brutal tactics and subsequent killings, little has been able to be done. In March 2018, President Duterte decided that the Philippines would withdraw from the International Criminal Court in response to a preliminary investigation into these "drug war" killings. President Duterte has also silenced domestic opponents; he imprisoned Senator Leila de Lima on politically motivated drug charges and even forced the removal of Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno. While Duterte technically ordered the police to terminate all operations in the war on drugs in October 2017, many question if they did truly end.

While President Duterte was not able to run for re-election, his replacement Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has unfortunately continued his predecessor's war on drugs. Despite his "golden opportunity" to satiate human rights activists and groups' demands, he has shown he is not ready to end this war. However, he has shown that he is willing to shift the war from a punitive focus to rehabilitating drug users. In May of 2021, the ICC requested to open an investigation into the possibility of crimes against humanity during the Duterte anti-drug war. While this request was originally approved in September 2021, the investigation was temporarily suspended in November after requests from the Capital. After President Duterte left office, he was henceforth stripped of his diplomatic immunity, leaving him to be able to be prosecuted.



Opinion:

While I do agree with President Duterte's intentions of cracking down on dramatically high drug use levels in his nation, I believe he took action on these issues in an entirely incorrect way. I believe it is the president's job to look after the citizens of their nation. They should not only help their citizens solve their issues, but also build them up and work their hardest to give these citizens better opportunities to thrive, which thus allows nations to thrive as a whole. The idea of literally killing anyone who is suspected of being involved in drugs is certainly erroneous in my opinion, and goes against the fundamental ideas of being a good president. Perhaps the new Philippine regime should take ideas from other nations' successful anti-drug programs. Norway has had a National Overdose Prevention Strategy since 2014, which is funded by the Norwegian Government. This strategy involves "low-threshold access to opioid agonist treatment, ample access to harm reduction services, including take-home naloxone and safe drug consumption rooms." Thus, President Marcos' new take on the anti-drug war may be wise. By rehabilitating his citizens, perhaps he will be able to help his citizens in beating their addictions, and thus create a healthier and more functional nation.

CIVILIANS OF GAZA: CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

JAMES KAPADIA

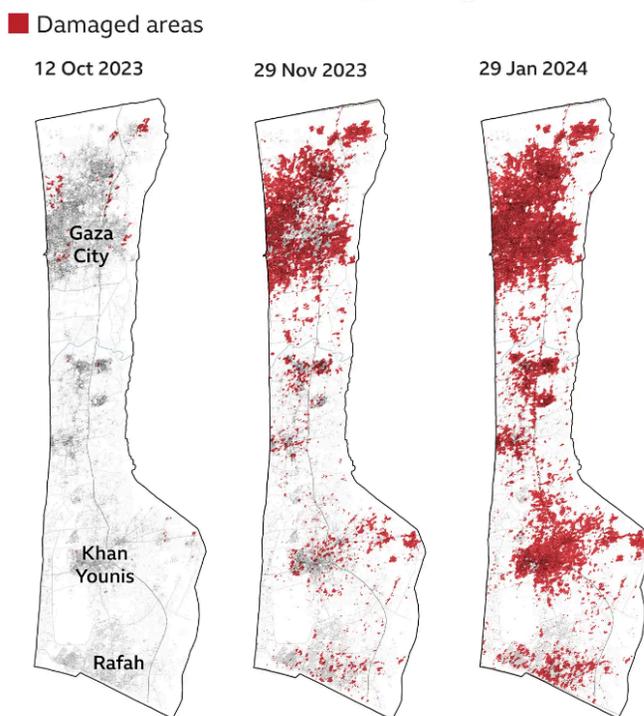
In June of 2007, in response to the takeover of Gaza by the terrorist organization Hamas, the Israeli military intensified existing movement restrictions, establishing a land, sea, and air blockade to stop the flow of arms to Hamas. Palestinian critics and human rights groups argue that the blockade has also prevented nearly anything from entering or exiting, ranging from patients in dire need of medical care to basic commodities like food and clean water, amounting to an unfair collective punishment which exacerbates a grim reality. According to the U.N., as a result of the blockade, 1.3 million out of 2.1 million Palestinians in Gaza (62%) require food assistance, over one-third (36%) of patients who have requested to exit Gaza for specialized medical treatment in the West Bank have been denied, and only 50% of the necessary electricity is supplied. Some have even described Gaza as “the world’s largest open-air prison.” Without basic necessities, the people cannot establish resilient industries, and the result is the unemployment of nearly half—46%—of the working population.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza took a turn for the worse after the events of October 7th. The Israel-Hamas war began when Hamas launched the deadliest single attack on Israelis in history, killing an estimated 1,200 Israelis and kidnapping approximately 240 more. Hamas released more than 100 prisoners during a weeklong cease-fire in November in exchange for 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Hamas militants still hold around 130 Israelis, a fourth of them believed to be dead.

Since October 7th, Israel has responded with

a deadly campaign against Hamas, bombarding the whole of Gaza. As of early May, Israel’s actions have killed just under 35,000 people—over 1% of the population—and injured more than 78,600 others, according to Gazan health officials. Though Hamas does not distinguish between civilian and military deaths, the UN has found that most of the casualties are non-combatants because women and children alone account for nearly 70% of the deaths. With the blockade still active, Gaza’s three largest major hospitals are unable to provide medical care, only adding to the number of civilian deaths.

Satellites show increasing damage across Gaza



Source: Damage analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University, UN Ocha, OpenStreetMap, European Commission GHSL **BBC**

Some argue that the veracity of the death toll is questionable because the Gazan Health Ministry—controlled by Hamas—might be a biased and untrustworthy source. On the other hand, U.N. agencies, like the World Health Organization and the Office for Coordinated Humanitarian Affairs, have continued to publish the data. Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for U.N. Secretary General António Guterres said on

May 13th: “[The U.N. has] the sad experience of coordinating with the Ministry of Health on casualty figures every few years for large mass-casualty incidents in Gaza; and in past times, their figures have proven to be generally accurate.”

Beyond the disputed death toll, infrastructure damage—due to “widespread, intense, and sustained bombardment from the air, land, and sea, ongoing ground operations and clashes, and the besiegement of the population”—has crippled the already resource-poor Gaza, devastating its agricultural, livestock, and fishing industries. Analysis of satellite imagery from late January estimates that between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings (50% to 61% of total structures) across the entire Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. The affected structures include 390 schools and at least 183 mosques, according to local sources. The issues are only exacerbated by the ongoing blockade. According to a December report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 93% of Gaza’s population faces crisis levels of food insecurity, and sanitation infrastructure has also been decimated. At least 50% of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities have been damaged or destroyed in Gaza. The lack of available facilities has led to an upturn in disease, and with hospitals still inoperative, the death toll rises exponentially. The impact is felt especially among children under five, with an increase in reporting of cases of scabies, lice, chicken pox, skin rashes and more than 160,000 cases of acute respiratory infection among that age group.



The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk explains: “Such destruction of homes and other essential civilian infrastructure entrenches the displacement of communities that were living in these areas prior to the escalation in hostilities.” With 300,000 housing units damaged or destroyed, the refugee problem in Gaza is profound. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have fled the bombing in the north, packing themselves in the last designated safe zone: the city of Rafah. All told, with over 1.4 million Palestinians fleeing to escape the bombardment, some 80 percent of Gaza’s residents are considered refugees under international law, and Pales-

tinians overall compose the largest stateless community in the world.

In February of 2024, the Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced the country's intentions to push forward into Rafah and continue the ground assault. After IDF operations dismantled 18 out of Hamas' 24 battalions, Rafah stands as the final base of operations for Hamas. Hamas still poses an active threat to the Israeli government and people, and the IDF has vowed to dismantle the terrorist organization in all forms, including remaining strongholds in Rafah. Unfortunately, millions of Palestinians fleeing Gaza sought shelter in Rafah. Now, by unfortunate circumstances, they are threatened by military action. The only real alternative for Palestinians is Egypt, who has historically welcomed refugees from surrounding countries. Unfortunately, Egypt is already home to some 390,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers, and there is neither enough room nor enough resources for the entire Gazan population. As one father in Rafah grimly explained, the options for Palestinians are to "stay and die or climb the walls into Egypt."



Humanitarian groups are working to improve the conditions for civilians in Gaza, providing essential services, particularly focusing on water and hygiene needs. They have supplied fuel to operate wells, desalination plants, and water trucking services and distributed thousands of jerry cans, family hygiene kits, menstrual health products, soap bars. Unfortunately, access to Gaza still remains a problem. The UN has blamed Israel for the aid blockages and the EU foreign policy chief has alleged that Israel is using starvation as a "weapon of war." On the other hand, Israeli officials have vehemently denied these accusations, arguing instead that they have increased accessibility into the region and that Hamas is to blame for stealing aid. While the root cause of the aid shortage is unknown, every day, millions of civilians continue to suffer.

UNPACKING THE ETHIOPIAN TIGRAY CONFLICT/ETHIOPIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS

EVELYN GROSS

Human rights, inherent fundamental rights granted to individuals by the constitution and the natural order of law, began facing challenges in Northern Ethiopia in 2020. This is due to a conflict between Tigrayan forces and the Ethiopian federal government, causing significant harm to communities. Despite both sides agreeing to stop fighting, the aftermath has resulted in human rights problems, such as displacing over 2.8 million people, widespread malnutrition, a failing healthcare system, and loss of lives.



In Ethiopia, The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) had reigned in politics for thirty years. The TPLF was accused of being autocratic and corrupt, and in 2018, there were protests to bring down the TPLF in Addis Ababa, which brought Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed into power. Additionally, since Ethiopia is a federal state, a coalition of four ethnic-based parties called the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front predominantly controlled the government until December 2019, when the Prosperity Party was formed after the dissolution of the Ethiopian Peoples'

Revolutionary Democratic Front coalition. The Prosperity Party was led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who decriminalized the political movement deemed treason and allowed peaceful demonstrations. The TPLF believed Abiy Ahmed was trying to consolidate his power, fueling tensions between the TPLF and the central government.

The TPLF still controls Tigray, one of the nine regional states in Ethiopia, situated in the north and bordering Eritrea. In 2020, the TPLF conducted elections in Tigray, disregarding COVID-related restrictions and defying political authority. These actions increased the impression of political illegitimacy and made different ethnic groups feel marginalized. Some ethnic groups in Tigray saw the actions as defiance of established political processes, while others perceived them as attempts to consolidate power. These political reforms increased ethnic tensions, leading to more violent incidents and clashes between different ethnic groups, which contributed to the human rights crisis. Abiy Ahmed asserted that Tigray's administration lacked legality and constitutional legitimacy, and the ongoing conflicts between the Tigray People's Liberation Front Regional Security Force and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces escalated in the Northern Tigray Region, resulting in widespread human rights violations. This conflict severely limited access to most of the North Tigray Region, except for the capital city, Mekele, causing the healthcare system to collapse, as well as extrajudicial killings, torture, restricted freedom of association, violence, arbitrary arrests, and harsh prison conditions.

The conflict extended into adjacent regions, Afar and Amhara, and Oromia, a state, joined forces with the TPLF against Abiy. As all sides of the fight have been accused of atrocities, the

public and the UN raised concerns about human rights breaches by security personnel, and the attorney general commissioned the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to investigate the allegations. The issues of freedom of speech, assembly, and political prisoners were addressed amicably. The EHRC addressed the issue of ethnic-based killing in Oromia by deploying investigators, which led to the arrest of 1500 police officers who directly participated in the extra-judicial killing, the ethnic-based killing in Oromia, the arbitrary arrest, harsh conditions in the prisons and spreading tension and violence.

The United Nations is a representation of the international communities that strive to prevent the occurrence of violence, which is a violation of international law, by first enacting a cease-fire in the region of Afar, Amhara, and Tigray. The ceasefire is vital in disseminating humanitarian support in the affected area and prevents further displacement of people and crush of the healthcare system. Similarly, despite the Ethiopian government denying the allegation and investigation by the UN at the initial stage, the Conduct in UN Field Missions, which is subordinate to the United Nations, aired the grievances that required the Ethiopian government to conduct the investigation and clear the international allegation. The UN has referred to this conflict as the world's worst hunger crisis, as millions are at risk of starvation. The World Food Program provides food, which aids in reducing malnutrition that emanated from the human rights crisis caused by the war. Nevertheless, the TPLF and the government face accusations of impeding food delivery in the territories under their control.



Opinion: Possible Solution

The solution for the Tigray war is a conundrum due to the history and politics between the Ethiopian ethnic groups. However, implementing demilitarization and ceasefire is one of the most effective strategies to solve the war. The demilitarization strategy involved the voluntary surrender of weapons and withdrawal of troops in phrases to restore the trust that promoted unity and peace in the communities experiencing violence. The enactment of a peace process and negotiation is an effective strategy that enhances genuine dialogue between the Tigrayan force and a representative of the government to address the preexisting grievances. Peaceful engagement involves the process of mediation, in which the aired grievances are addressed, which creates a collaborative society and fosters peace and tranquility. Therefore, demilitarization, cease-fire, and enactment of peace negotiations are effective solutions for solving Ethiopia's human rights crisis.

STRENGTH & SOLIDARITY: THE SPIRIT OF THE UKRAINIAN PEOPLE

LILI FRANGENBERG



The Russian invasion of Ukraine remains a pressing and devastating issue for all countries on a global scale, and as time rolls forward the crisis will become more exigent for not only the Ukrainian people but also for all global powers. The Russian siege of Ukraine began in 2014 when the Russian military annexed Crimea and seized the Crimean Autonomous Assembly in an attempt to promote the union of Ukraine with Russia. Through the utilization of a Referendum issued in Crimea in 2014, 95.5% of Crimean voters supported the union of the two countries, yet Russia recognized that this was not an internationally shared belief. Consequently,

the Russian government knew the only chance they had at successfully making modern Ukraine a Russian territory would be through conquest and would require the Russian military to capture all Ukrainian cities and wreak havoc upon Ukrainian citizens.

On February 24th, 2022, Putin gave a public announcement stating that Russia would invade Ukraine in an attempt to demilitarize and “de-Nazify” it since alleged Ukrainian forces were carrying out a “genocide” in breakaway pro-Russian territories in the East.

Another motivation behind Putin’s announcement was his end goal of bringing back the imperialistic values of the Soviet Union and becoming the most powerful global force, which could only be done through more territorial control of the countries that used to be under Russian control. Hours after Putin’s announcement, explosions went off all across the country, and Russian ground forces followed by Tanks and other artillery crossed into Ukraine from the North, South, and East. This marked the beginning of what would be a two-year invasion, still raging on today. Putin emphasized that if any external countries attempted to stop Russian forces and aid

Ukraine in any way, Russia would retaliate and make sure to punish any of these external countries. Since Ukraine was not able to join NATO because of the risks that other Countries would potentially be putting themselves in if they accepted Ukraine into the organization, it is up to other countries to support and aid Ukraine in any other way. Once the invasion had started, global powers such as the United States began planning how to fight off the Russian forces without directly tipping off Putin or his government as best as possible.



In the past 2 years, 6 cities have been destroyed within Ukraine, and dozens of towns and historical monuments have also been obliterated. As of today, Russia occupies Crimea, and parts of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, Mykolayiv, and Zaporizhzhya Oblasts. However, even with more than 300,000 Russian troops in different regions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian people have been fighting for their country

since the invasion started and successfully combating Russian troops. Many ethnically Ukrainian people have also voluntarily enlisted within the Ukrainian military, and all Ukrainian soldiers and civilians have agreed to keep fighting off Russian influence and keep the Ukrainian spirit alive until Russia surrenders. As Ukrainians continue to band together with the common goal of defeating Russia, external countries can see that there is nothing Ukrainians won't do to fight for their culture and salvage all that remains of their home.



Opinion:

In my opinion, the attack on Ukraine by the Russians will sadly not end soon, and the devastation on both sides of the crisis will keep increasing. Putin's government will continue to fight for Ukraine simply because of Putin's desire to re-spark the "greatness" of the Soviet Union, and the only way this can be achieved is through acquiring Ukraine. While this is the unfortunate truth, I am hopeful that the spirit and sheer force of the Ukrainian people can and will overpower the strength of the Russian troops and that the Ukrainians will come out victorious from this battle. However, I believe that even if the Ukrainians are able to win this war, the environmental, economic, and political damage will be substantial. This is why all countries and organizations that are supporting Ukraine will have to band together and send resources, money, and other damage control supplies in order to help Ukraine rebuild its country and go back to the place it once was. I also believe it will be tough for Ukrainians to reintegrate themselves within regular everyday society, so supporters must do everything they can to make Ukrainians feel heard and understood in order for them to restructure their society. I also believe that Ukrainians will not return to pre-invasion society, and as such, they will need a strong leader that is willing to listen to the pleas and wishes of the people. Democracy in Ukraine must be kept and emphasized if Ukraine wants to rebuild, and it is the job of other countries to not infringe on the democracy of the Ukrainian citizens. If supporters of the Ukrainian crisis come together, I believe there is hope for the future of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people, and once and for all the totalitarian Russian regime led by Putin can come to an end.

THE E-WASTE TSUNAMI: AN ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH CRISIS

CLAIRE TSAI

A “tsunami of e-waste [is] rolling over the world,” warns Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. The ominous caution comes in the midst of rapid technological advancement, as new innovations transform the way we communicate and work. However, amidst this facade of progress lies an inescapable truth: the pace of technological change is producing growing volumes of obsolete products. Electronic waste, or e-waste, is broken or undesired electric and electronic equipment that is dumped into landfills, with the majority not being recycled. Improper disposal of e-waste poses a silent but lasting threat, polluting our environment, making global efforts crucial for responsible management.

A staggering 40 million tons of electronic waste is produced each year. As an increasing number of devices are produced and connected to the internet, by 2050, this number could top 120 million tons annually. However, the so-called “waste” also contains valuable materials and components that can be recycled, including gold, silver, and a variety of rare earth minerals. The problem is that globally, only up to 20% of e-waste is recycled.



E-waste recycling is a complex process where reusable raw materials are separated from harmful chemicals and other unusable components. It involves disassembling electronics, separating and sorting contents by material, and cleaning them. Items are shredded and sorted using technologies. Due to exposure to hazardous materials, e-waste recycling is often dangerous. Hence, com-

panies are required to meet health and safety standards, using pollution control technologies to minimize environmental and health concerns. While these strict regulations aim to improve e-waste recycling, they also make recycling expensive. Thus, many companies and countries illegally export their waste to developing countries, where a combination of lax regulations, corrupt officials, and poorly paid workers allow for cheaper recycling.



In these countries, mostly in Asia and Africa, unregulated and unlicensed informal recycling industries jeopardize the health of workers. Workshops employ women and children who sort through electronic devices, cellphones, computers, and game consoles, dismantling devices by hand in search of valuable materials. These jobs are dangerous as workers lack protective equipment and are unaware of the toxic substances they are exposed to. With gloves, face masks, and ventilation fans being virtually unknown, workers have little idea of what they are handling.

These conditions are detrimental. Because toxic chemicals are used in the recycling process, e-waste harms human health, exposing workers to toxic substances. Recycling processes—dismantling components, wet chemical processing, and incineration—all cause direct

exposure and inhalation of harmful chemicals. Workers are at risk of being exposed to over 1,000 harmful substances such as lead, mercury, and nickel. The harmful health effects include changes in lung function, respiratory effects, DNA damage, impaired thyroid function, and increased risk of chronic diseases. Each year, one million people die of occupational poisoning.

Moreover, e-waste recycling damages the environment as fumes and gasses are emitted into the air, liquid waste is discharged into water and drainage systems, and hazardous chemicals are disposed of. With poor regulation, chemicals are poured into underground aquifers, causing the local groundwater to become unfit for human consumption or agriculture. Soils become toxic when substances, including lead, mercury, cadmium, and arsenic, are deposited in landfills. Additionally, the burning of electronic equipment contributes to carbon emissions. A report by the United Nations predicts that by 2040, carbon emissions from the production and use of electronics will reach 14% of total emissions, the equivalent to emissions of half of the total global transport sector.



Because health and environmental concerns will only worsen as more products enter the waste stream, addressing the root of these is-

sues is crucial to prevent further devastation. Thankfully, a combination of governmental action and safer, regulated e-waste recycling can help.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a policy approach that holds manufacturers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, from production to disposal. The benefit of this is twofold: 1) promoting collection, reuse, and recycling of e-waste, and 2) shifting the responsibility for disposable upstream, encouraging companies and manufacturers to make their products more environmentally friendly. This approach has already been implemented. For example, in Hong Kong, suppliers and sellers of electronic products have to pay for the removal, collection, handling, and proper disposal of items. In the United States, the New York State Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act requires manufacturers to provide consumers with free and convenient e-waste recycling. Although more research on the efficacy of this policy is still needed, the non-governmental organization The Recycling Partnership found that Extended Producer Responsibility Policy drove the collection and recycling of target materials to over 75% in British Columbia, Belgium, Spain, South Korea, and the Netherlands, with Portugal and Quebec at over 60%. However, due to the rising levels of e-waste, widespread policy improvements are critical to enforce the success of these programs.



Developing countries can integrate formal and informal recycling systems to lessen the negative health and environmental effects of informal recycling. Currently, the informal sector receives and processes the majority of e-waste, yet they lack proper machinery, protective equipment,

and training in handling e-waste. Thus, integration of the informal sector with formal systems and municipal waste management is crucial to mitigate the negative effects of unregulated and dangerous waste disposal. A study of China's recycling system found that providing professional training to workers and improving informal recycling facilities helped informal recycling systems transition to formal ones.



The era of technological innovation has created an ever-growing waste stream as electronic products and components are disposed of. A lack of waste collection and formal recycling systems is causing health and environmental concerns. Whether it is through policy programs that hold manufacturers responsible for the entire lifecycle of their products or getting rid of informal recycling systems, it is imperative that we prioritize responsible consumption, environmentally friendly product design, and safe recycling processes. While the e-waste tsunami may not engulf entire coastal towns in the same manner as a physical one, its growing tide, if left unchecked, has the potential to inflict comparable levels of damage to the world.

FINANCIAL CRISIS IN ARGENTINA

ZOE MANGES

Over the course of the next year, the value of Argentina's currency is projected to decrease at an inflation rate of 254%. This inflation rate was, at the end of 2023, the fourth highest in the world, behind only Venezuela, which is experiencing a crisis of overprinting; Zimbabwe, which has suffered economically since its failed economic reforms in the 1990s; and Sudan, which is currently undergoing a devastating civil war. And yet, as recently as the early/mid 20th century, Argentina was one of the wealthiest nations in the world, on par with the United States and other developed Western economies. In this context, their financial crisis seems unusual. While inflation has been occurring for years due to a number of historical factors, Argentinian citizens are experiencing the shock of the inflation more acutely now than ever, leading to political changes that will shape the country for the near future.

To understand Argentina's current inflation, it is crucial to understand its past prosperity. At the turn of the century, it was extremely prosperous

for its exports – particularly the export of beef. Its GDP (gross domestic product) growth was 6% year over year, a rate which was unparalleled for its time. During World War I, however, the rise in tariffs and blockades devastated the Argentine economy, which was dependent on foreign consumption. Instead of rebuilding its economy, as many other nations did post war, Argentina elected president Juan Perón, whose protectionist policies aimed to protect Argentina from the kind of economic devastation it suffered during WWI. Pulling out of the global market, however, had the opposite effect. Argentinian companies were no longer able to compete internationally when they lifted their protectionist policies in the 1970s, leaving their economy stagnant and inefficient. Argentina experienced a period of depression in the 1990s whose effects were ameliorated by the 2000s' rise in international consumer demand, having the twofold effect of ending the depression and making the Argentinian economy dependent on foreign demand yet again and setting the stage for its current economic struggles.

There are two primary causes of this recent economic crisis: first, Argentina's severe

drought, and second, its uptick in inflation, caused by the government's overprinting of money during the COVID-19 pandemic, both of which have led to heightened inflation and social unrest. The lack of rain has made it increasingly difficult to grow the crops, such as soy, corn, and wheat, that make up the bulk of Argentina's exports and thus their economy, causing many workers to lose their jobs and the poverty rate to climb to nearly 40%. To make matters worse, as the value of the peso drops, corporations have been raising prices on their goods in order to avoid losing money, and the burden of these increased prices has fallen heavily on the Argentinian people. Soup kitchens, for example, report overflowing as impoverished people without another source of food are forced to seek them out for aid. Importantly, this crisis has led to political change which threatens to exacerbate the issue.

In response to this inflation, Argentinian citizens elected the right wing politician Javier Milei in December 2023 in the hopes that he would solve the nation's crisis. Milei proclaims himself to be an anarcho-capitalist and advocates for drastic economic reforms. His plans, which initially centered around the process

of dollarization - Argentina's switch from the peso to the dollar as currency - have become less radical, but will still have a large impact on the nation. Milei's administration is enacting a series of "shock measures" in order to decrease the inflation rate in the long term by increasing it drastically - economists estimate that it will rise as high as 300% annually - in the short term. Through cutting government subsidies to corporations and further reducing the value of the peso, Milei's policies aim to decrease excessive government spending, which he views as the root of Argentina's economic crisis, in order to end inflation and make the country more appealing to foreign investors.



In order to alleviate the effect of these policies on Argentinian's poorest citizens, Milei has promised to double welfare spending for people living in poverty; however, while he was initially popular despite his radical ideas, his shock measures are facing backlash from both Argentinian citizens and economists, who doubt their efficacy and fear the impact on already struggling citizens, many of whom have lost their jobs and live in poverty. Argentinian activist Juan Grabois described these policies as "a social murder" in which the Economy Minister Luis Caputo figuratively murders the poor "without flinching like a psychopath about to massacre his defenseless victims." Although the impact of Milei's plans remains to be seen, there can be no question that he has inherited a nation at a turning point. Argentinian policy now - whether it succeeds or fails to curb inflation - will dictate the lives of its citizens for much of the near future.

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