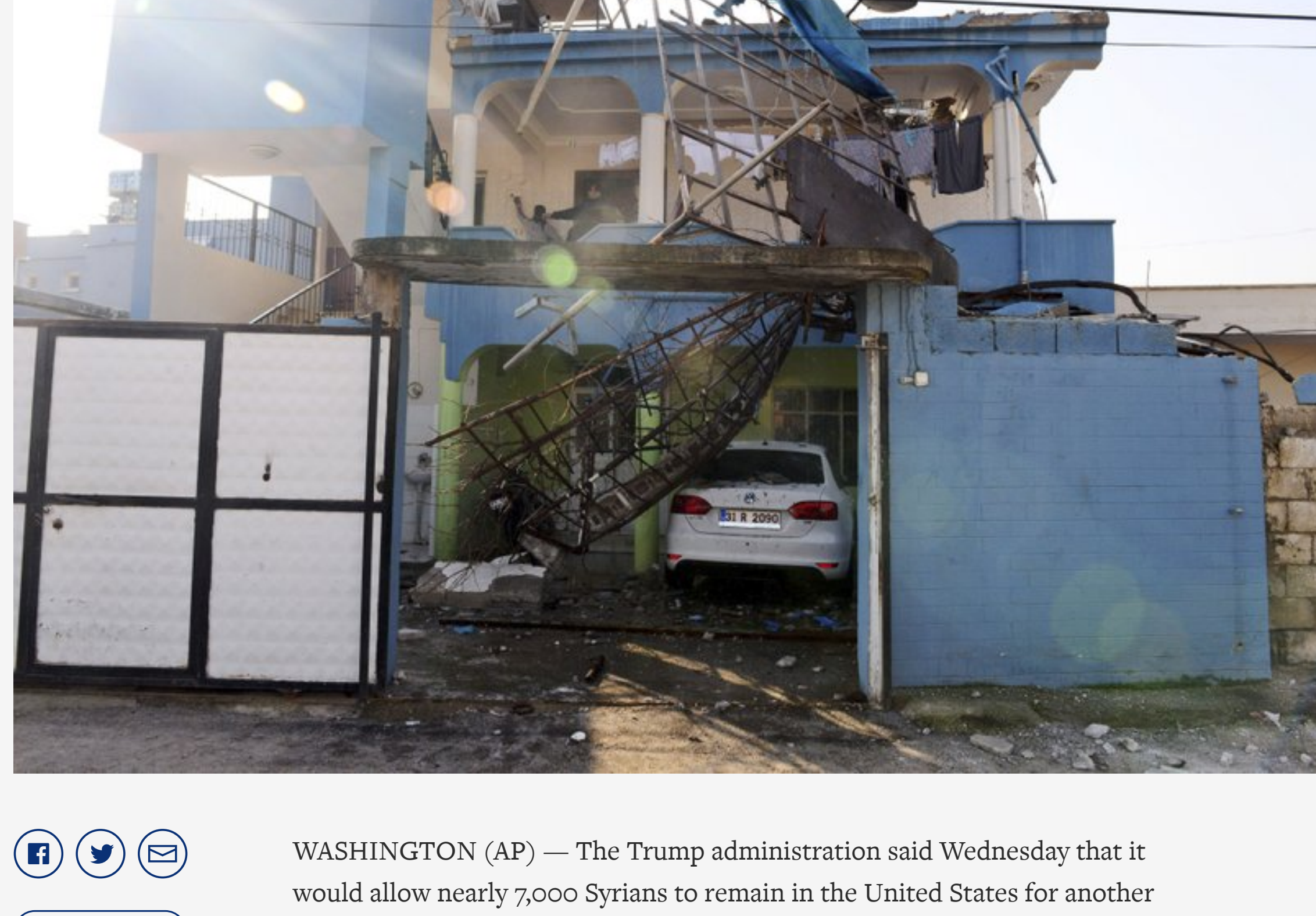




Trump lets protected Syrians stay longer but caps enrollment

By MATTHEW LEE, JOSH LEDERMAN and ELLIOT SPAGAT January 31, 2018



WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said Wednesday that it would allow nearly 7,000 Syrians to remain in the United States for another 18 months but won't let more Syrian citizens apply for the special protection program.

The decision was a partial relief for aid organizations and advocates for displaced Syrians who had feared President Donald Trump might end the program entirely, forcing those in the U.S. to leave or face deportation. Yet those same groups blasted the president for excluding more recent arrivals to the U.S., pointing out that Syria remains devoid of any notion of stability or normalcy.

Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said "ongoing armed conflict and extraordinary conditions" justified giving those in the program another year and a half to remain in the U.S.

"After carefully considering conditions on the ground, I have determined that it is necessary to extend," Nielsen said.

Only those who have been in the United States since Aug. 1, 2016, are eligible for that extension, disqualifying newer arrivals. Still, Nielsen said those who came to the U.S. more recently "may be eligible to seek other forms of immigration relief."

Syria remains entangled in a bloody civil war with no signs of near-term resolution. Although the Islamic State group has been squeezed from almost all of its former territory, armed opposition groups continue to fight with each other, with Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and with extremist groups that still pose a threat across Syria. U.S. military forces are active both on the ground and in the skies. In areas liberated from IS, the U.S. has said much work is needed to restore basic services like water, sewage and electricity.

"We made a commitment to offer safety to these people in a time of crisis," said Lia Lindsey of the aid group Oxfam. "Syria, without a doubt, continues to be unsafe and unstable."

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Under a humanitarian program known as "Temporary Protected Status," thousands of Syrians have been allowed to avoid returning to their war-torn country of origin. The current program has been set to expire on March 31, forcing Trump to decide whether to extend.

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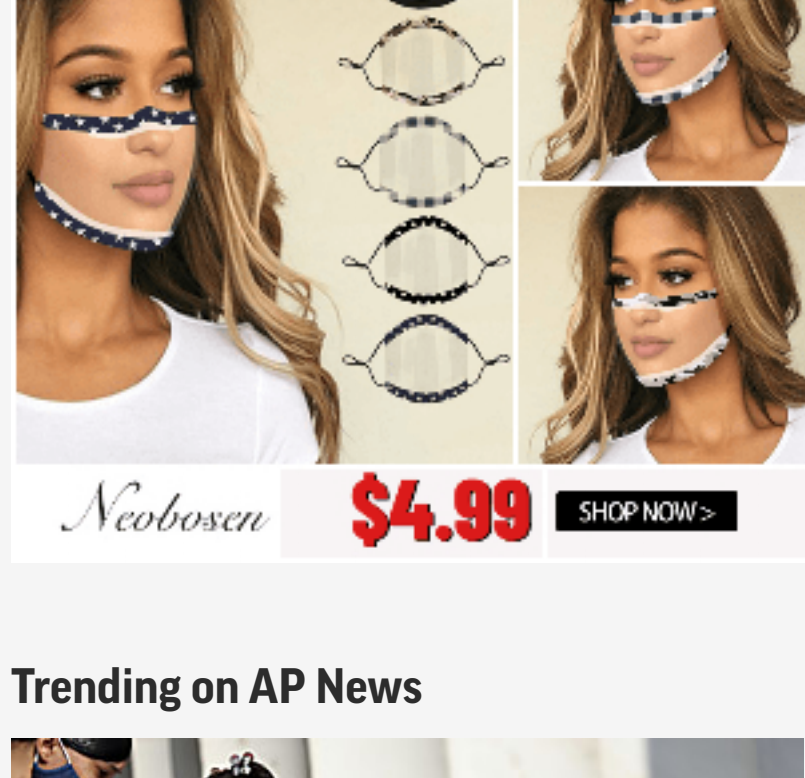
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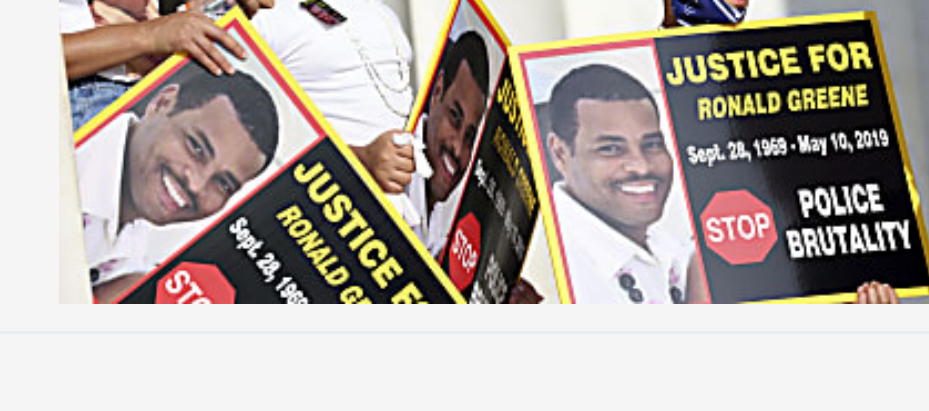


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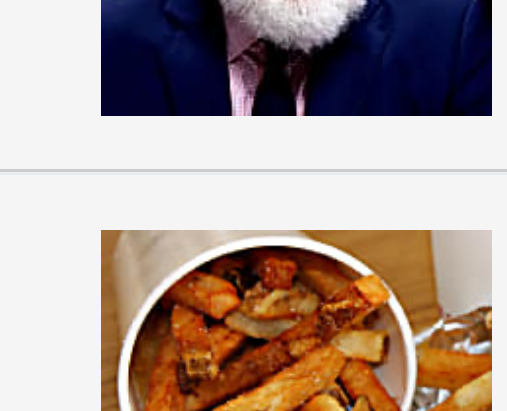
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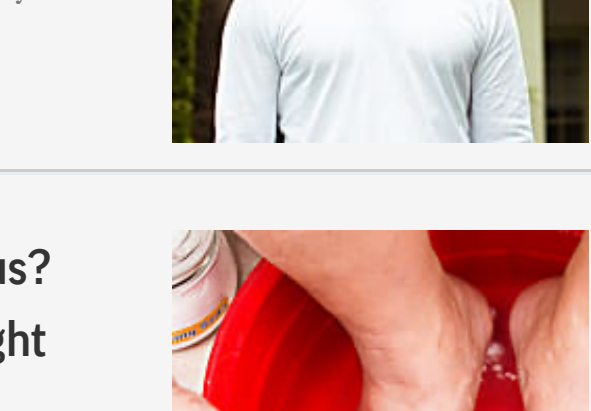
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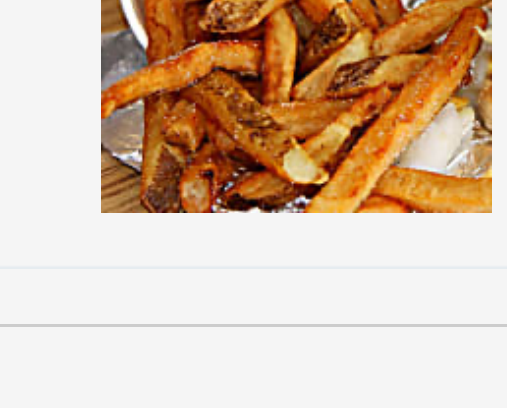
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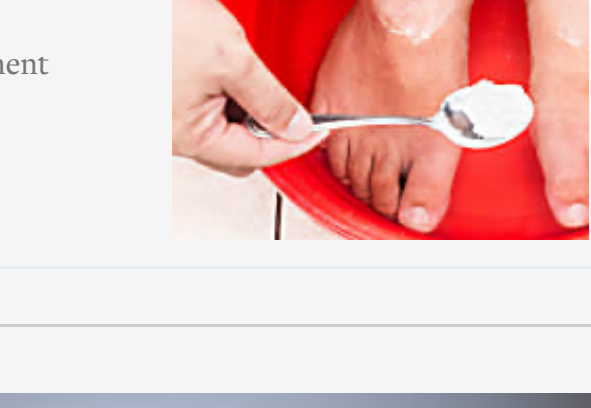
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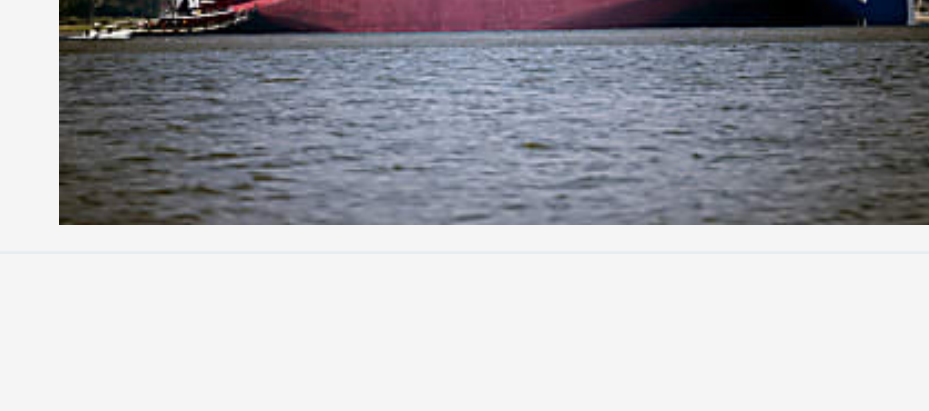
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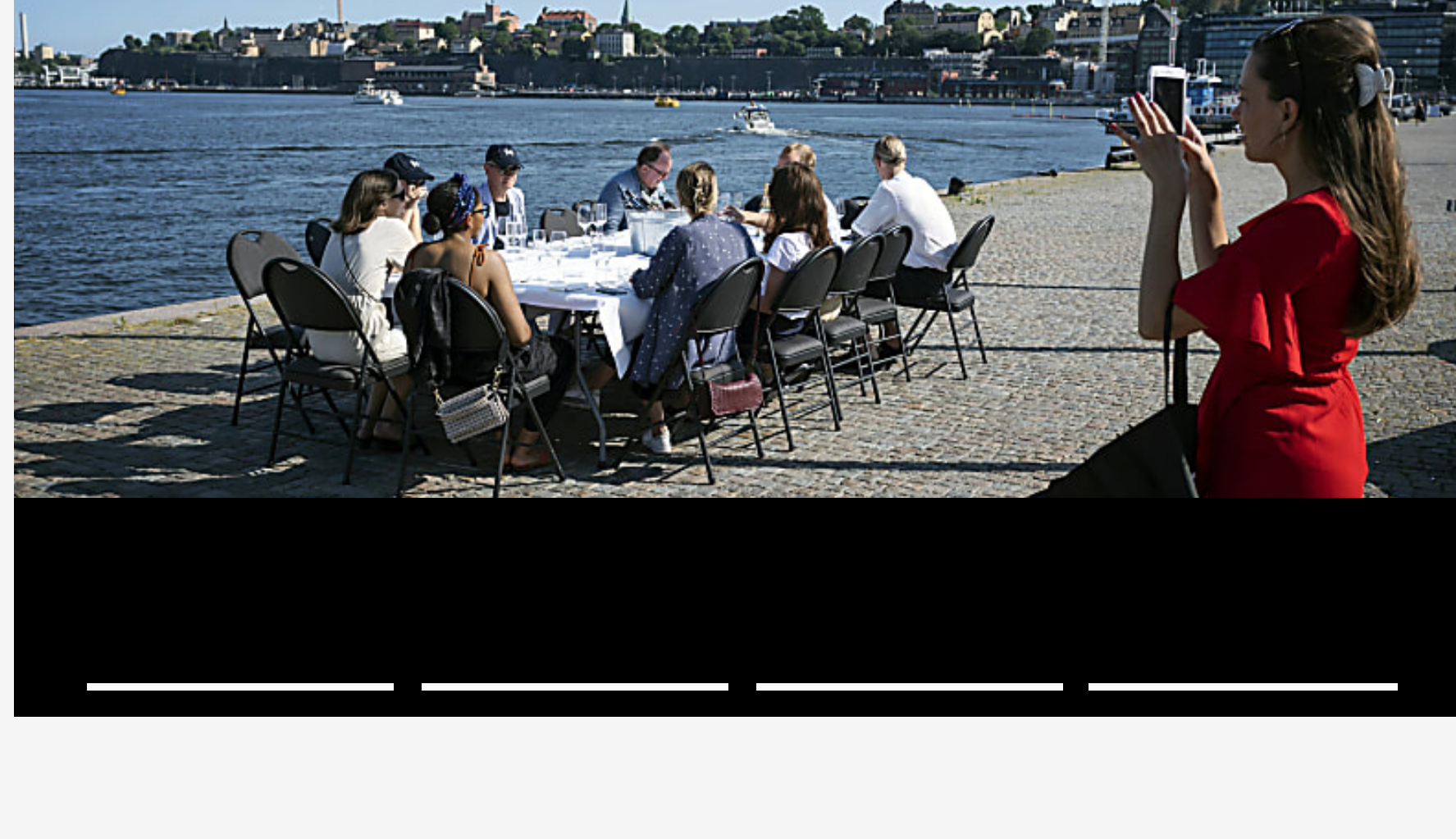
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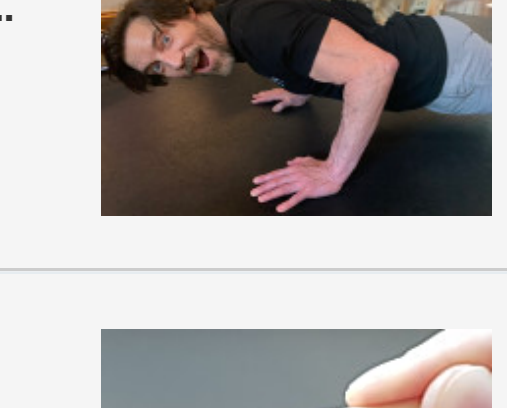
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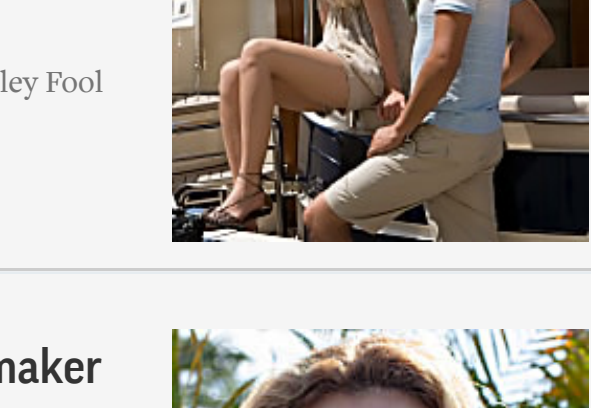


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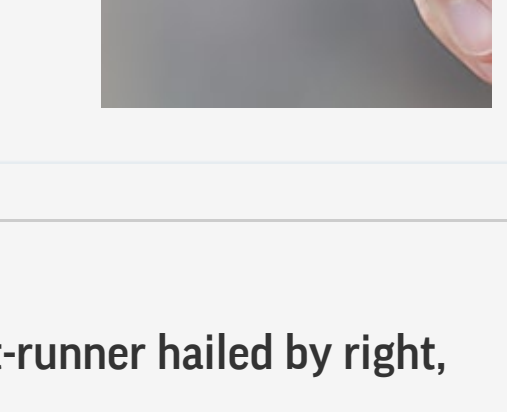
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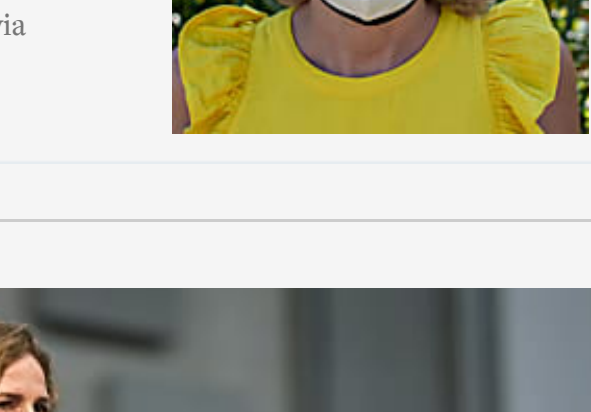
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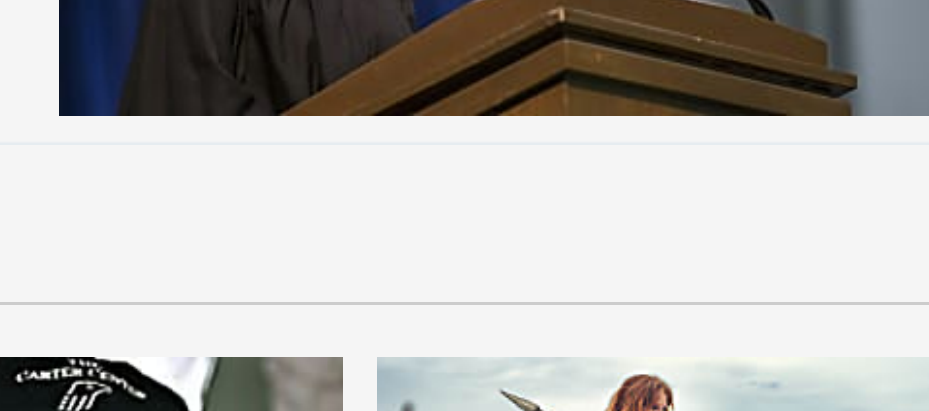
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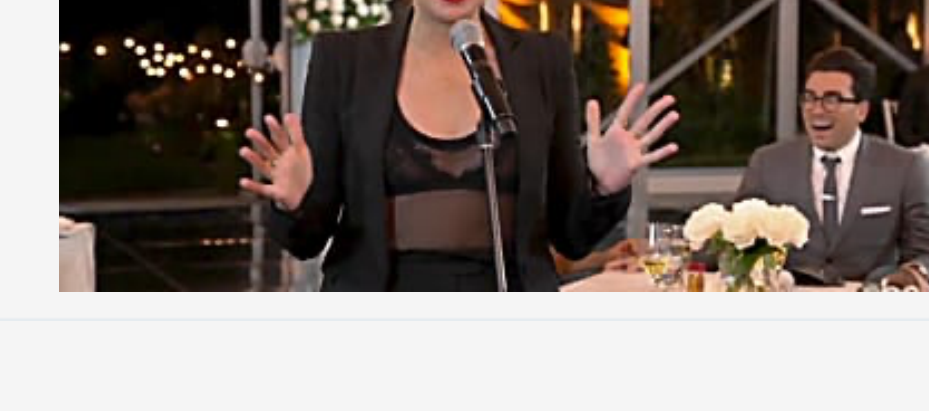
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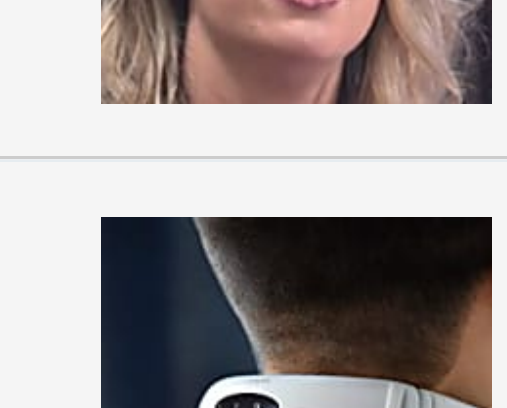
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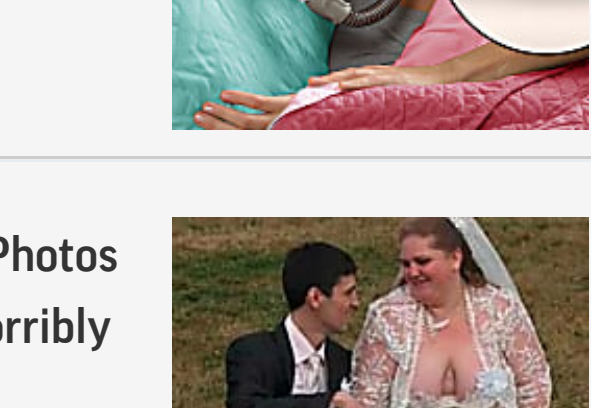
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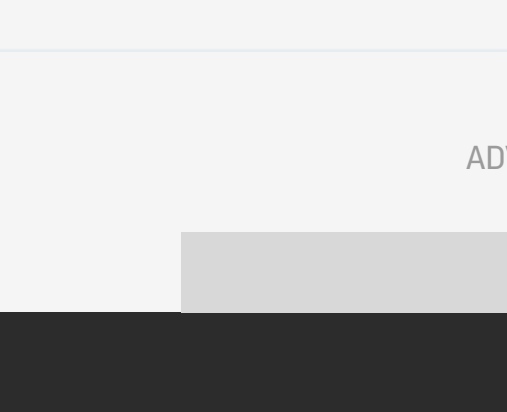
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