
Former President Trump indicted, but his judicial troubles are not denting his political appeal

(From New York) A few hours after having filed his fingerprints in a Manhattan courthouse and left an indelible mark on American history, former President Donald Trump proclaimed from his residence in Mar-a-Lago, Florida, in front of a group of followers and before the cameras the counter-narrative to his court case that sees him as a victim, not just a defendant. "They can't beat us at the ballot box, so they try to beat us through the law", Trump, the first former U.S. president ever charged with a crime, said Tuesday night. "We are a nation in decline and now, these radical left lunatics want to interfere with our elections by using law enforcement", continued Trump, tying the allegation that he paid hush money to a former porn star, a Playboy magazine model and a doorman to save his 2016 campaign, to judicial persecution. Speaking for less than 30 minutes, Trump was more subdued than usual as his long day in New York City took its toll. The former president had entered the Manhattan Criminal Court through a side door earlier in the afternoon and listened to the 34 counts of indictment accusing him of falsifying corporate documents to hire a fixer who allegedly helped him keep the electorate in the dark about supposed romantic affairs. Trump pleaded not guilty, while he was admonished about the attitude to take in the months leading up to his next hearing in December: secrecy, respect for members of the prosecution, an end to threats to public safety.



Trump did not criticize the New York case in particular, instead turning his attention to additional indictments he may face soon. The former president called on Atlanta prosecutors to "drop" the case around his attempt to overturn the 2020 election in Georgia. He went on to condemn an ongoing federal investigation into his handling of classified documents, describing special counsel Jack Smith - who oversees the investigation into the documents and actions put in place following the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol - as a "madman." Finally, Trump also derided the New York State investigation into his activities. "With all of this being said and with a very dark cloud over our beloved country, I have no doubt nevertheless that we will make America great again", Trump reiterated, presenting himself as a hero and victim at the same time. "The only crime that I have committed is to fearlessly defend our nation from those who seek to destroy it", he explained. The narrative of an impeached former president and victim of the judicial system has highlighted an all-Trumpian and seemingly irreconcilable paradox: the more Trump's legal problems mount, the more polls show him favored in the Republican Party primary, where the gap with Florida's Republican governor, Ron DeSantis (not yet officially a candidate) continues to remain wide. The former president's financial fortunes are also benefiting from the indictment: in the four days following the announcement of the indictment, Trump's campaign received donations in excess of \$8 million, while a marketing campaign will be launched with T-shirts where the date 4.4.2023 is printed. There are quite a few within the Republican Party who argue that Trump's actions are political rather than criminal and deride the \$135,000 paid to the former porn star for his silence; while they argue that the Trump case will bring many more voters to the polls. The next hearing in the trial has been scheduled for December and while defense attorneys have asked to attend online to avoid New York security issues and protection costs, the judge made it clear that he expects Trump to be present, albeit on the eve of the party primaries. This new court summons will be grounds for another rally in his favor, such as the one

sponsored in front of the Court this morning by Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, which did not, however, gather the desired numbers. There were about 300 pro- and anti-Trump protesters, while hundreds of news outlets flocked to grab a commentary or some tense scene between the two factions, who were separated by plain barriers, even though the number of police deployed was sizable. Flags for Trump went from the nostalgic, "Trump 2020," to the future "Trump 2024."

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