FROM PANDEMIC LINGERS

Emergency laws

EMERGENCY laws during the pandemic targeted

travel, socialising, mask mandates and going

Measures in the Public Interest) Act 2020.

They were first introduced under the Health

Offences included breaching regulations to prevent, limit, minimise or slow the spread of Covid, restrictions on the movement of persons

(Preservation and Protection and other Emergency

outside limited zones.

and obligations on relevant

travellers to self-quarantine

They led to high-profile

cases - such as Dublin

mums Niamh Mulreany

mandatory quarantine

hotel in 2021 after they

surgery trip in Dubai.

detained for a time at

In December 2021.

Margaret Buttimer was

jailed for six months for

refusing to wear a mask.

mprisoned for 90 days ir

In January 2021, three

men received fines after they told gardai they had

travelled from Meath to get burgers from a Dublin

Cops issued a €1,160 fine to the organiser of the

Over the border in Co Fermanagh, country

music star Nathan Carter apologised after the

PSNI called to his home following reports of a

event and 14 fines of £200 to attendees.

PARTY Nathan Carter

She had also been

July 2021 for the same

house party.

Cork grandmother

returned from a cosmetic

The pair became known

as the "Dubai Two" and were

Mountioy Women's Prison

and Kirstie McGrath.

The pair had

allegedly refused a

LENIENCY CALLS AS FALL-OUT

BY FERGHAL BLANEY and DANNY DE VAAL

PEOPLE are still being jailed and fined for lockdown offences committed during the pandemic, the Irish Mirror can reveal.

Our special investigation found there have been more than 13,000 prosecutions under now outdated Covid laws.

There have been fines totalling €775,000 – and more than 70 jail sentences overall.

One man fined €2,000 in 2021 for travelling home to Ireland from abroad to check on his elderly mother is challenging his case.

Two people were jailed for breaching restrictions in the first four months of this year, three years on from the introduction of emergency laws to curb the spread of the virus.

So far in 2023, 1,700 such cases breaches have come before the courts.

The revelations come as the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar warned of a "new wave of Covid" with a 90% case

EXCEPTIONAL

Solicitor Brian Burns insisted prosecutions should be halted as the pandemic is over. Fianna Fail justice spokesman Jim

O'Callaghan has urged judges to be lenient towards Covid offenders. He said many are "normally law-

abiding citizens at an unusual time when ordinary human behaviour was

Mr O'Callaghan said: "There were reasons justifying the enactment of those laws at that time.

"But I would hope that prosecutors take into account the exceptional nature of that

when deciding now whether to initiate or The unique persist with background prosecutions. "If lockdown should prosecutions

be taken still come before our into courts, the account unique background should FIANNA FAIL TD be taken into account."

Analysis shows the pandemic offence of "movement of persons" - such as breaching the two kilometre limit - attracted the most fines, totalling €548,840 over three years.

House party fines – for either organising or attending one – totalled €105,680;

22,230 and failure to wear a face breaches.

fines and 70

sentences, fears Ireland's become a..

mask in shops or pubs/restaurants came to €18,500. A total of 16 people were fined over €1,000 – with four of them mother in 2021.

slapped with a €2,000 penalty. The figures show how Ireland later summonsed to court. was much stricter than neighecutions here compared to

England and Wales. Mr Burns is leading the legal challenge against the prosecutions, which relate to emergency legislation introduced to stop the pread of the virus.

Mr Burns - of BKC Solicitors in Dublin's Harold's Cross

has repre-

in Spain and fined €2,000 when he flew home to check on his elderly

He applied to get it waived but was

which will challenge the lawfulness of had criminal records. Certainly none

ravelling abroad added up to clients before the courts on Covid the prosecution. Mr Burns said the of my client prosecutions should be stopped as the have a crim-One case is of a man who was living pandemic is over. He added: "I just <mark>inal record</mark>

think they should stop issuing them. The people "You should stop summoning before the courts on these people to court for these offences. Full

His case comes before the High don't think any of the people fined - of adding to it. bours, with five times the pros- Court in October for a judicial review, apart from a tiny portion – actually

offences aren't lawbreakers

"Covid was scary for a lot of people When I was in court, the last day, I and what's going on now is just kind

> "Things have moved on and it's bringing it back. They're getting fined,

jailed so far in Ireland in 2023. In the course of the pandemic, 72 were given jail sentences, with 26

fined as much as €11.000.

cases struck out.

penalty was €2.000

Her prosecution was later struck

Justice Minister Helen McEntee has no plans for an amnesty on Covid prosecutions – but instead has increased the number of judges to deal with them.

Her spokesperson said: "Earlier this year the Government committed to dramatically increase the number of judges to facilitate greater access to justice and to clear Covid

breaking restrictions. Fines for travel abroad hit €2,000.



Trump won't take part in prez debate

BY **JILL COLVIN**

DONALD Trump has confirmed he will be skipping tomorrow's first Republican presidential primary debate - and potentially later ones too.

Writing on his Truth Social media platform, he said: "The public knows who I am & what a successful presidency I had. I will therefore not be doing the debates."

His spokesman did not immediately clarify whether Trump plans to boycott every primary debate or just those that have been scheduled.

The former president and front runner for the party's nomination had said for months he saw little upside in joining his GOP rivals on stage when they gather for the first



Coroner rules on death of tragic Joshua

A VERDICT of unlawful homicide has been returned at an inquest into the death of a six-and-a half-month-old infant whose father was convicted of his murder.

The hearing into the death of Joshua Tighe, of Lavallyroe, Ballyhaunis, was conducted by Mayo Coroner Pat O'Connor.

He told the court John Tighe had been convicted by a jury at the Central Criminal Court of murder on June 1, 2013.

The killer subsequently appealed his conviction but that was dismissed earlier this year.

The coroner said Garda investigations into the murder have now concluded before recording a verdict of unlawful homicide.

Lockdown strict compared

IRELAND had one of the strictest lockdowns in the world.

As such, the prosecution rate here is almost five times that of our nearest neighbours, the UK. Even though they have 10 times our population, we have

400 Covid court cases a month, compared to 100 there.

There were over 28.000 Covid prosecutions in England and Wales in

the course of the pandemic This compared to over 13,000 in the

Republic of Ireland. The convictions were for Covid-related offences, such as attendance at gatherings or arriving at airports without a test. Most recent Irish data - for January

to April this year - indicate there are

still over 400 cases a month being taken here. Two people have been

and they could

actually face jail time. I don't actually

think that will happen but

they still have that threat hanging

"For a lot of these people, it's their

first time in court. İt's a very scary

experience. Ignorance to the law is

irishmirror.ie

ABANDONED

suspended. British courts hit

average last year was €7,000, although some people have been

some consideration for that."

number of people fight the prosecu-

tions but he has succeeded in getting

One European citizen had trav-

In this jurisdiction, the maximum

vere changing so need to move her family back home rapidly – there has to be to care for her unwell parents. Mr Burns said only a small

defence but the rules closed. She was concerned she'd

out after judicial review.

elled home to get passports for her

During the pandemic, gardai could issue fixed penalty notices for

Non-payment of fines resulted in summonses to the District Court.

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